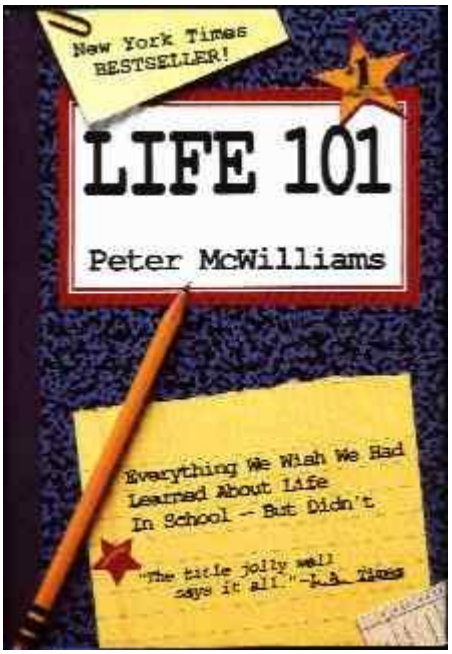

LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

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PRELUDE:

What If?

What if life were perfect?
What if you lived in a perfect world of perfect people and perfect possessions, with everyone and everything doing the perfect thing at the perfect time?
What if you had everything you wanted, and only what you wanted, exactly as you wanted, precisely when you wanted it?
What if, after luxuriating in this perfect world for the perfect length of time, you started feeling uneasy about the predictability of the perfection?
What if, after a perfect length of additional time, you began thinking, “There seems to be a lack of risk, adventure and fun in perfection. 'Having it my way all the time is starting to get dull.”
What if, after yet another perfect length of time, you decided, “Perfection is a perfect bore.”
What if, at that point in your perfect world, you noticed for the first time a button marked, “Surprise.” What if you walked over, considered all that might be contained in the concept of “surprise,” decided, “Any-thing's better than perfect boredom, "took a deep breath pushed the button...

...and found yourself where you are right now feeling what you're feeling now, thinking what you're thinking now, with everything in your life precisely the way it is now-- reading this book.

LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION TO LIFE

Welcome to life.

I call this book *LIFE 101* because it contains all the things I wish I had learned about life in school but, for the most part, did not.

After twelve (or more) years of schooling, we know how to figure the square root of an isosceles triangle (invaluable in daily life), but we might not know how to forgive ourselves and others.

We know what direction migrating birds fly in autumn, but we're not sure which way we want to go.

We have dissected a frog, but perhaps have never explored the dynamics of human relationships.

We know who wrote "To be or not to be, that is the question," but we don't know the answer.

We know what pi is, but we're not sure who we are.

We may know how to diagram a sentence, but we may not know how to love ourselves.

That our educational system is not designed to teach us the "secrets of life" is no secret. In school, we learn how to do everything--except how to live.

Fred Sanford: Didn't you learn
anything being my son?

Who do you think I'm
doing this all for?

Lamont Sanford: Yourself.

Fred: Yeah, you
learned something.

Maybe that's the way it should be. Unraveling life's "mysteries" and discovering life's "secrets" (which are, in fact, neither mysterious nor secretive) may take the courage and determination found only in a self-motivated pursuit.

You probably already know there's more to life than reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. I'm glad you learned reading, of course, or you wouldn't be able to read this book. I'm also glad I learned 'riting (such as it is).

And 'rithmetic? Well, as Mae West once said, "One and one is two, two and two are four, and five'll get you ten if you know how to work it." That's what this book is about: knowing how to work it, and having fun along the way.

Although a lot can be learned from adversity, most of the same lessons can be learned through enjoyment and laughter. If you're like me, you've probably had more than enough adversity. (After graduating from the School of Hard Knocks, I automatically enrolled in the University of Adversity.)

I agree with Alan Watts, who said, "I am *sincere* about life, but I'm not *serious* about it." If you're looking for serious, pedantic, didactic instruction, you will not find it here. I will--with a light heart--present hundreds of techniques and suggestions, and for each of them I make the same suggestion:

Give it a try. If it works for you, fine--use it; it's yours. If it doesn't work for you, let it go and try other things that may. When you find things that *do* work for you, I advise you to follow Shakespeare's advice: "Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel."

Naturally, not everything in *LIFE 101* will be for you. I'm laying out a smorgasbord. The carrot-raisin salad you pass up may be the very thing another person craves, while the caviar you're making a beeline for might be just so much salty black stuff to the carrot-salad lover.

If I say something you find not "true," please don't discount everything else in the book. It may be "true" for someone else. That same someone else might say, "What nonsense," about something which has you knowingly muttering, "How true." It's a big world; we are all at different points on our personal journeys. Life has many truths; take what you can use and leave the rest.

We don't receive wisdom;
we must discover it
for ourselves after a journey
that no one can take for us
or spare us.
MARCEL PROUST

If you take from this book ten percent--any ten percent--and use it as your own, I'll consider my job well done.

Which brings me to the question: Who is the *real* teacher of *LIFE 101?* I'll get to that shortly. (Hint: It's certainly not me--or *I,* as the grammatically correct among us would say.) (Second hint: It is *definitely* not me.)

For now, welcome to *LIFE 101*. When you were born, you probably had quite a welcome, although you may have been too young to remember it. So, as you begin this "life," please feel welcome.

Although it may be "just a book," it's a book of ideas from my mind to yours; a book of best wishes from my heart to yours. As James Burke observed, "When you read a book, you hold another's mind in your hands." (So be careful!) Here's to our time together being intimate, enjoyable, and loving.

Welcome.

Why Life?

Life is far too important a thing
ever to talk about.
OSCAR WILDE

What's it all about? Why are we here? What's the point? *Is* there a point? Why bother?

Why life?

At some point, you have probably pondered The Meaning of Life, and you came up with a satisfactory answer, which either has or has not stood the test of time, or you shrugged mightily, muttered, "Beats the hell out of me," and ordered another cheeseburger. *The Meaning of Life* . Very funny; very true.

The question which precedes "What's the meaning of life?" is, of course, "*Is there* a meaning to life?" Beats the hell out of me. I'm going to explore the first question *as though* the answer to the second question is yes.

If it's true that life has no meaning--no purpose--then it doesn't matter whether I've consumed a few pages speculating on the meaning of life. So let's play a game called "Life Matters."

We'll start the game by *assuming* there is a purpose. The first question of Life Matters: "What is the purpose of life?"

Here's my answer:

Life is for doing, learning, and enjoying.

Doing

Things won are done;
joy's soul lies in the doing.
SHAKESPEARE

One thing about humans: we are *doing* creatures. When we're not doing something, we're *thinking* about doing something, which, in its own way, *is* doing something. When we sleep, we toss and dream. We exercise to keep our bodies in shape so we can do some more.

We are well designed for doing. Unlike trees, our bodies can move from place to place. In a matter of seconds, our emotions can move from happy to sad and back again. Our thoughts move us to places we can't go

physically--our memory moves us back in time, our intelligence anticipates future movement, and our imagination takes us to places we've never been.

As to nature-you name it, and humans have either changed it, processed it, painted it, preserved it, moved it, or done *something* to it. (At the very least, we *named* it.) We seem bent on rearranging the world.

The theatrical director Moss Hart had a country home. He would visit on weekends, and request of his landscape designer that a few trees be put over there, a stream over here, and please move that mountain a few hundred feet to the left. When playwright George S. Kaufman visited Hart's home, he remarked, "This is the way God would do it if He only had money."

The shortest answer is doing.
LORD HERBERT
1583-1648

It's often been observed that, from afar, the doing of humans resembles the bustling of ants. We must occasionally wonder, "What *is* the purpose of all this doing?" We are not, after all, rocks, which don't seem to do much at all. We have the ability to do, but why?

We must, of course, do in order to meet our bodily needs (which would not be as great if we did not do as much), but even after these needs are met, we keep on doing. Why?

My suggestion:

Our doing allows for more learning.

Learning is not
attained by chance,
it must be sought for with ardor
and attended to with diligence.

ABIGAIL ADAMS
1780

Learning

Wear your learning,
like your watch,
in a private pocket:
and do not pull it out
and strike it,
merely to show
that you have one.
EARL OF CHESTERFIELD
1774

Life is for learning? Learning what? You name it. There's a lot to learn. In just the first five years of life we learned physical coordination, walking, talking, eating, going potty, interaction with family and playmates, a great many facts about this planet, and all the other things that differentiate a five-year-old from a newborn infant.

From age five to ten we learned reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, science, music, sports--and when we weren't watching television we learned some more about people: friends, relatives, enemies, allies, rivals, supporters, detractors.

Some of what we learned early on turned out to be true (the earth is round; if you want a friend, be a friend; cleanliness is next to impossible) and some of it turned out to be false (Santa Claus; the Tooth Fairy; Kansas is more fun than Oz).

Some things had to be relearned-or unlearned-and while relearning and unlearning, maybe we learned what to do about disappointment--and maybe we didn't.

Looking in on most lives, we see dramatic growth until the age of fifteen or twenty. Then the growing slows, stops, or, in some cases, regresses.

Most people declare themselves "done" when their formal education is complete. What is it about renting a cap and gown and receiving a scroll of paper that makes us think our learning days are over?

I call that mind free which jealously
guards its intellectual rights and
powers, which calls no man master,
which does not content itself with a
passive or hereditary faith, which opens
itself to light whencesoever it may come,
which receives new truth as an angel from Heaven.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING
1829

It's not that there's nothing left to learn. Far from it. "Commencement" does not just mean graduation; it means a new beginning.

The more we learn, the more we do. The more we do, the more we learn. But in all this doing and learning, let's not forget one of the most important lessons of all--enjoyment.

How good is man's life,
the mere living!
How fit to employ all the heart
and the soul and the senses
forever in joy!
ROBERT BROWNING
1855

Enjoying

Seek not, my soul,
the life of the immortals;
but enjoy to the full
the resources
that are within thy reach.

PINDAR
518-438 B.C.

Joy is an interesting word. It does not have an automatic opposite created by grafting "un" or "dis" or "in" onto it. There is pleasure and displeasure, happiness and unhappiness, gratitude and ingratitude--but there is no unjoy, disjoy, or injoy. (Can you imagine the word *in* enjoy?)

The old story comes to mind: Two brothers went to ride ponies on their uncle's ranch, but first the uncle insisted that they shovel a large pile of manure out of a stall. One brother hated the project, grumbling his way through a few halfhearted scoops. The other brother was laughing and singing and shoveling with abandon. "What are you so happy about?" the

first brother asked. "Well," the second replied, "with all this manure, there must be a pony in here somewhere!"

So it is with life. When life seems truly excremental, we can moan and groan, or we can--even in the midst of anger, terror, confusion, and pain--tell ourselves, "There must be a lesson in here someplace!"

The trick, I think, is to learn to enjoy the process of learning. As Confucius observed 2,500 years ago, "With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and my bended arm for a pillow--I still have joy in the midst of these things."

"With an eye made quiet by the power of harmony, and the deep power of joy," wrote Wordsworth, "we see into the life of things."

A man's life of any worth
is a continual allegory.
JOHN KEATS

Life Is a Metaphor

There are many models for life: analogies, allegories, and metaphors to help us understand something as complicated, intricate, and seemingly *un* understandable as life.

There is the Life-Is-a-Game school of thought (and its many subschools: Life Is a Baseball Game, Life Is a Football Game, Life Is Like Tennis, Life Is Chess, Life's Like Monopoly, Life As Croquet).

"Life is like a game of whist," Eugene Hare pointed out some time ago. "From unseen sources the cards are shuffled, and the hands are dealt." Josh Billings completed the thought: "Life consists not in holding good cards but in playing those you hold well."

Some believe Life Is an Intricate Machine (very popular in Germany). In Northern California they believe Life Is a Computer. Buckminster Fuller synthesized the two: "The earth is like a spaceship that didn't come with an operating manual."

Is life work or play? Karl Marx said, "Living is working," and Henry Ford, of all people, agreed: "Life is work." Disagreeing is Leon de Montenaeken,

who said, "Life is but play," and Liza de Minnelli, who sang, "Life is a cabaret."

The very purpose
of existence is to reconcile
the glowing opinion
we hold of ourselves
with the appalling things
that other people
think about us.
QUENTIN CRISP

Seneca said, "Life is a play. It's not its length, but its performance that counts." What kind of play is it? Jean de La Bruyere suggested life's "a tragedy for those who feel, a comedy for those who think." Kirk Douglas called life "a B-picture script." (From Seneca to Kirk Douglas in one paragraph. Not bad.)

Shakespeare, of course, called life "a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage" and James Thurber continued: "It's a tale told in an idiom, full of unsoundness and fury, signifying nonism." George Bernard Shaw also took the Bard to task: "Life is no brief candle to me. It is sort of a splendid torch that I have got hold of for the moment."

There are those who like musical analogies. "Life is something like a trumpet," the great W. C. Handy pointed out, "If you don't put anything in, you won't get anything out." Samuel Butler said, "Life is playing a violin solo in public and learning the instrument as one goes on." Ella Wheeler Wilcox sang, "Our lives are songs: God writes the words / and we set them to music at pleasure; / and the song grows glad, or sweet or sad / as we choose to fashion the measure."

One of the nicest literary analogies comes from the Jewish Theological Seminary: "A life is a single letter in the alphabet. It can be meaningless. Or it can be part of a great meaning."

One of the greatest letters in the American alphabet, HELEN KELLER, proclaimed, "Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing." George Bernard Shaw agreed: "Life is a series of inspired follies. The difficulty is to find them to do. Never lose a chance: it doesn't come every day."

How about closing this chapter with the Life-Is-Food contingent?

"Life is an onion," Carl Sandburg wrote. "You peel it off one layer at a time, and sometimes you weep." "Life is like eating artichokes," T. A. Dorgan tells us. "You've got to go through so much to get so little." Or maybe it's more as Auntie Mame pointed out: "Life is a banquet, and some poor sons-of-bitches are starving."

Don Marquis called life "a scrambled egg." Make of that what you will--but then, we could say that about life itself, couldn't we?

And what do *I* think life is? What model do I use to describe our time together? Please turn the page.

Life Is a Classroom

Universities should be safe havens
where ruthless
examination of realities
will not be distorted
by the aim to please
or inhibited by the risk of displeasure.
KINGMAN BREWSTER

It should come as no surprise that, if I think life is for learning, I would view the process of life itself as a classroom. But it's not a dull, sit-in-neat-little-rows-and-listen-to-some-puffed-up-professor-drone-on-and-on classroom. Life is (as I'm sure you've noticed) *experiential*. In that sense, life's more of a workshop.

I like to think the workshop/classroom of life is perfectly arranged so that we learn what we need to learn, when we need to learn it, just the way we need to learn it.

The operative word in all that is *need,* not *want.*

We don't always learn what we *want* to learn. In tenth-grade biology there was only one animal's reproductive methods I was interested in studying, but I had to start with splitting of amoebas (yawn) and work my way up. The biology teacher had a lesson plan different from mine.

And so, it seems, does life.

Life's lessons come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes what we need to know we learn in a formal way, such as taking a class or reading a book. Sometimes we learn by an informal, seemingly accidental process: an overheard comment in an elevator, a friend's offhand remark, or the line of a song from a passing radio ("Don't worry, be happy").

I like to think there are no accidents.

The most important
function of education
at any level is to develop
the personality of the individual
and the significance of his life
to himself and to others.
This is the basic architecture of a life;
the rest is ornamentation and
decoration of the structure.
GRAYSON KIRK

Positive lessons are not always taught in positive ways. A flat tire (hardly a positive occurrence) can teach any number of lessons: acceptance, the value of planning, patience, the joy of service (if another person has the flat tire), the gratitude of being served (if another person helps you), and so on.

We can also use the same flat tire to learn (or relearn or rerelearn or--in my case--rererelearn) depressing lessons: life isn't fair; nothing can be trusted; if anything can go wrong it will (at the worst possible moment); life's a pain--then you die; nobody loves me.

Do you begin to see your role in all this? The classroom of life is not third grade, where all you will learn each day is neatly planned--including recess. In life, you *choose* what you learn from the many lessons presented to you, and your *choice* is fundamental to what you learn.

There are any number of lessons we can learn from any experience--both uplifting and "downpushing."

Experience, it is said, is the best teacher--providing, of course, we become the best students.

But who, really, is the teacher?

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION TO LIFE

Who Is the Real Teacher?

We learn simply by the
exposure of living.
Much that passes for education
is not education at all
but ritual.
The fact is that we are
being educated when
we know it least.

DAVID P. GARDNER

The real teacher of life is not experience. It's not overheard conversations or lines from songs or what you read in books (or the people who wrote the books).

The real teacher is *you*. You're the one who must decide, of all that comes your way, what is true and what is not, what applies to you and what does not, what you learn now and what you *promise yourself* you'll learn later.

Have you noticed that two people can read the same book or see the same movie or be in the same relationship and remember entirely different things? The best that life can do is *present* lessons to you. The learning is up to you.

I can't do any better than life. All I can do is present certain points of view, possible explanations, and whatever I have learned from certain experiences.

From what I present, it's up to you say, "Yes, that fits," "No, that doesn't," or "Let me consider it for a while and see." If it fits, take it: it's yours. I just put words around something you already knew.

If you listen carefully, you'll hear (or sense) a voice inside you. It's the voice of your inner teacher. (I'll use the word *voice,* but for you it may be an image or a feeling or a sensation or any combination of these.) It may not be the loudest voice "in there," but it's often the most consistent, patient, and persistent one.

No matter how cynical you get,
it is impossible to keep up.

LILY TOMLIN

What does your inner teacher sound like? It's the one that just said, "I sound like this."

If you're like me, you probably had other voices answering that question, too. "No, no, I sound like this." "There is no inner voice." "More than one voice? Do they think I'm crazy?" "Inner teacher. How stupid!"

But, through the din--lovingly, calmly, and perhaps a little amused by all the commotion caused by a simple question--the inner teacher reminds you,

"I am here. I have always been here. I'm on your side. I love you."

As President Nixon says,
presidents can do
almost anything,
and President Nixon has done
many things that nobody
would have thought of doing.

GOLDA MEIR

Who Are You?

Who *Are* You?

Who Are *You ?*

Nobody can be
exactly like me.
Sometimes even I
have trouble doing it.

TALLULAH BANKHEAD

What *are* all those other voices? Who's *saying* all that stuff? And why? And which "you" do I mean when I say, "*You* are the real teacher"?

Try a brief experiment. Take a moment and be aware of your body. Quickly "scan" it from your feet to your head. How does it feel? Are there any areas of tightness or tension? Do any parts feel particularly good? Is there any soreness or stiffness? Do you feel tired or alert?

When you close your doors,
and make darkness within,
remember never to say that
you are alonE,
for you are not alone;
nay, God is within,
and your genius is within.
And what need have they of light
to see what you are doing?

EPICTETUS

Now, take a look at your emotions. (Or perhaps I should say, "Take a *feel* of your emotions.") What are you feeling? Excitement? Fear? Contentment? Irritability? Calmness? Emotions are often felt in and around the heart (the center of the chest) and the stomach. What are you feeling there?

One more bit of observation: notice your thoughts. What are you thinking? Listen to your mind as it goes through its thought process. A study once said we think at 1,200 words per minute. How they counted the words, I don't know. How they translated the visual and sensory thinking we do into words, I also don't know. That figure does, however, give a sense of the continual chatter going on in our brains. (Some Eastern traditions call this the "monkeymind.") Listen to the chatter for a moment.

Now, one question: Who did that? Who noticed the body? Who felt the feelings? Who observed the mind?

Maybe it was something other than the body, greater than the emotions, more magnificent than the mind.

Maybe it was *you* .

Go directly
--see what she's doing,
and tell her she mustn't.

PUNCH
1872

Maybe You Are More Than Your Body

The body is a community
made up of its innumerable
cells or inhabitants.

THOMAS ALVA EDISON

The body has enormous wisdom: it circulates blood, digests food, and performs thousands of necessary functions every second--all without your even having to "think" about them.

The body keeps itself from getting ill and heals itself when it does. It sees, hears, feels, tastes, smells--and has the sense to do that without ever being taught how. It performs the amazing feat of balancing itself on two legs, something--considering its size, proportions, and center of gravity--it has no business doing.

Alas, the body doesn't have much "smarts." Instincts, absolutely. Other animals have bodies, too--complete with wisdom and instincts. But something, whatever it is--reason, intelligence, awareness, soul, or "smarts"--separates humans from the rest of the animal kingdom.

Ask yourself: are you (the *you* you) located in the body, or located in the "Something extra"? That's a loaded question, of course. Who can resist the temptation to associate themselves with "something extra" (especially a *mysterious* something extra)?

Even if we unload the question ("Are you more than your physical body?"), I think you see the point:

As remarkable as our bodies are, we somehow know that we are more remarkable than that.

Perhaps You Are More Than Your Mind

Crystal:*Do you realize that*
most people use two percent
of their mind's potential?

Roseanne: *That much, huh?*

Roseanne

This is a difficult concept for thinkers to think about and for comprehenders to comprehend. "That which separates humans from beasts is the human being's superior intellect," they say, "its well-developed mind."

Perhaps, perhaps not. Let's explore.

The mind is often too full of opinions and "facts" about the way things *were* to accurately evaluate the way things *are.* For many people, the mind's job is to prove what it already knows is enough--there's no need to learn anything new.

As John Kenneth Galbraith pointed out, "Faced with the choice between changing one's mind and proving there is no need to do so, almost everyone gets busy on the proof."

Firmness of mind, to a point, is a good thing. It keeps us from being wishy-washy, swayed by every new tidbit of information that comes our way. If firmness is carried to an extreme, however, the mind becomes closed to new information from any source. The closed mind is, obviously, not open to learning. Learning is the assimilation and integration of new ideas, concepts, and behaviors. You may be wondering, "Is my mind closed?" If you asked yourself that, it probably isn't. The closed mind, when faced with the concept that the mind is not the "It" of "Its," disregards the information--often vehemently. (As Dorothy Parker said, "This book is not to be tossed lightly aside, but to be hurled with great force.")

Your mind must always go,
even while you're shaking hands
and going through
all the maneuvers.
I developed the ability long ago
to do one thing
while thinking another.

RICHARD M. NIXON
1960

If you're still reading this book and actively exploring the option that the mind might not be "you," then your mind is obviously open enough to accept the idea that it is not necessarily the It of Its, and therefore open to learning.

Books such as *LIFE 101* have filters built in--not into the book, but into the people who might read the book. Those not *open* to new ideas seldom read books that *contain* new ideas. These people don't even pick up such books--whose titles are often reason enough to disregard them. Their minds dismiss any book threatening to teach them something with, "It's one of *those* books."

Even certain sections in the bookstore are taboo. Some people never visit any of *those* sections. For some, the mere fact that it's a *book* is reason not to be bothered.

I don't mean to belittle the mind. (I make my living with mine.) The mind is an essential tool for sorting, organizing, conceptualizing, and replaying information.

My point is that the mind is a marvelous servant; it just makes a poor master.

Possibly You Are More Than Your Emotions

Joe, never feel guilty
about having
warm human feelings
toward anyone.

BEN CARTWRIGHT
Bonanza

Feelings are good things to have--when you're feeling good. There's nothing that feels quite so good as good feelings. On the other hand, when feelings feel bad, we often wish we didn't feel at all.

Emotions are like the vibrations on the strings of a violin: they're essential to the song, but they're not the essence of the violin.

We experience life's pains and pleasures through our emotions. Because of this, some people decide they *are* their feelings--"I feel, therefore I am." The problem is, emotions are too often too wrong to be who we truly are.

Did you ever feel you could trust somebody and you couldn't? Did you ever feel something bad was going to happen and it didn't? Did you ever feel you could spend the rest of your life loving someone, and, well, you know what happened to that one. (or, more likely, you *don't* know what happened to that one.)

Our emotions are like yo-yo's: sometimes they're up, sometimes they're down. We can walk the dog, go 'round the world, or practice "sleeping." Yo-yo's are fun, but who's holding the string?

If someone's holding the string, then "you" must be more than the string--be it the string of a violin, the strings of your heart, or the string of a yo-yo.

So Who Are You?

It's an
unanswered question,
but let us still believe in the
dignity and importance
of the question.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

If you're not your body, your mind, or your emotions, who are you?

Some might say our sense of self is simply an amalgam of the three; that the interplay of the body, mind, and emotions makes a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts, and that greater whole we call self.

This definition is fine with me--as are any religious, spiritual, or metaphysical views of self you may have. (I'll get to all those--yes, all of them--in just a moment.)

I'm not here to answer the question, "Who Are You?" I'm here to suggest that there is a "You" to be discovered. The discovery of that "You" is entirely your own--although the entire world is willing to help.

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION TO LIFE

The Gap: God, Religion, Reincarnation, Atheism, Agnosticism, and All That

Jean-Paul Sartre
(arriving in heaven):
It's not what I expected.

God: *What did you expect?*

Sartre: *Nothing.*
SCTV

I'm going to take a clear, unequivocal, unambiguous position on God, religion, reincarnation, atheism, agnosticism, and all that. My clear, unambiguous, and unequivocal position is this: I am clearly, unambiguously, unequivocally *not* taking a position.

It's not that I don't *have* a point of view about each of these; it's just that the information in *LIFE 101* works regardless of my or your or anyone's point of view.

There are certain forces--like the pull of gravity, the need for breathing, the desire for Hagen Dazs--that affect all of us regardless of beliefs. *LIFE 101* concerns itself with those "belief-proof" issues.

I'd like to introduce a portion of life I call The Gap. The Gap is the area into which I put the many (often conflicting) beliefs people have about What's The Big Force Behind It All And How Does This Big Force Interact With Human Beings?

The Gap can be any size, large or small. For some, it's a hairline crack; for others, it's vast enough to hold universes. I am not here to comment on the contents of anyone's Gap. The contents of your Gap are between you and whoever or whatever is in your Gap.

I love God,
and when you get to know Him,
you find He's a Livin' Doll.

JANE RUSSELL

I am not confirming, endorsing, or supporting *any* point of view. Most people will find this statement liberating. "You mean I don't have to sort out The Gap before I sort out my life?" No. In fact, a sorted, prosperous, joyful life might make Gap exploration all the more fruitful.

Some people have firm convictions on what should and should not be contained in everyone else's Gap. Others have powerful beliefs concerning the lack of the Gap itself. My militant wishy-washyism on this point will probably gather me detractors from both extremes.

One side might say, "I can't possibly read a book by a person who does not categorically and emphatically state that there is a God and believe in *my* God *my* way." I might ask these people if they've ever read a cookbook, road atlas, or auto repair manual. These seldom state the theological convictions of the authors, but are nonetheless read by the righteous every day.

The other extreme might say, "I can't even consider a book by a person who is even *open* to the idea that there is a God." I wonder if these people also investigate the beliefs of their doctors, dentists, and mail carriers and refuse service if any of them happens to feel all right about the Almighty.

What *I* believe in is giving people the freedom to believe whatever they choose to believe. The techniques contained in *LIFE 101* will help believers, unbelievers, and everyone in between, to live a healthier, wealthier, and happier life.

I'll be discussing techniques as direct and mechanical as cooking, car repair, map reading, and mail delivery. Unlike cooking, car repair, map reading, and mail delivery, however, the techniques for living a happier, healthier, more productive life have, in some cases, been linked to specific religious (or nonreligious) beliefs.

What I'm attempting to do in this chapter is to separate these techniques (which work regardless of belief or disbelief) from the claim that organized schools of thought--be they "religious" or "scientific"--have, at times, placed upon them.

The doctor who gives a vaccination and says, "Thank God, this child is safe from smallpox," and the doctor who gives a vaccination and says, "Thank Jenner, this child is safe from smallpox," give the same vaccination. Some may say that the doctor who gives a blessing is a better doctor, and some may say that the doctor who sticks to medicine is a better doctor, but in either case--thank God and/or Jenner--the child is safe.

My religion consists
of a humble admiration of the
illimitable superior spirit
who reveals himself
in the slight details
we are able to perceive with
our frail and feeble mind.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Historically, some religions have been slow to adopt certain "scientific" discoveries, and science has taken quite a while to adopt some "mystical" techniques.

Personally, I think we're all "old enough" to set aside the source, history, and trappings of certain techniques and ask of them a simple question: Do they work? (Do they produce the desired result? Do they get you what you want and need?)

In my thirty years of consciously exploring life (it started when I was fifteen, give or take a summer vacation), that's the question I've asked. (It's interesting that I can ask that question of itself, and it still holds up.)

So, as we go along, if I make a point that sounds like something you heard in Sunday school, that may be because you heard it in Sunday school. If I say something, and you think, "That sounds like the Ten Commandments," that may be because it's one of the Ten Commandments. If you say, "There he goes again, referring to Godless science," that's probably because I am referring, once again, to Godless science.

I care where ideas come from. I enjoy history. But I care even more where they might take me.

There Is More Going On Than Our Senses Perceive

Sooner or later every one
of us breathes an atom that
has been breathed before
by anyone you can think of
who has lived before us--
Michelangelo or
George Washington
or Moses.

JACOB BRONOWSKI

Our view of the world is primarily made up of what we have perceived through our five senses. What we *personally* know of the world we have either seen, touched, tasted, smelled, or heard.

Unfortunately, our senses are limited; therefore our view of the world is limited. This is not a problem *unless* we start believing that what we perceive is all there is. It's not.

This can be disturbing news to those who believe, "If I can't see it, taste it, smell it, hear it, or feel it, forget it."

If I told you that, *right now,* there are hundreds of voices, pictures, and songs filling the air around you, but you are unable to see or hear any of them, what would you think?

Would you think I was talking some metaphysical mumbo jumbo? "If there were hundreds of voices, pictures, and songs around me, I'd be able to at least see or hear *some* of them."

Not necessarily.

"Then your explanation's going to be pretty weird."

Not necessarily.

"Okay, so explain."

Right now you are surrounded by waves of energy "I knew it would be weird."

that are used to transmit radio, television, walkie-talkie, CB, portable telephone, and many other communication devices. The reason you don't know they're there is because your senses are unable to perceive these signals.

If you had, say, a TV, you could "tune in" these waves of energy. The TV would translate what your senses cannot perceive into what they can. The fact that we can't see, hear, or feel these waves without a TV doesn't mean they're not there.

And so it is with all sorts of natural and human-made phenomena: if we have the proper instruments, we can perceive them; if not, we can't.

Dogs smell and hear better than most humans. Cats see better in the dark. Birds are more sensitive to movement. Even houseflies seem to "know" when you're about to swat them. *backwards?* If you want to swat one, aim slightly *behind* it. See? This book is just *full* of things you never learned in school.

The point is simple: there is more to life than meets the eye.

The Great Pretender, or, *All* Life Is in the Fast Lane

Man is slightly nearer
to the atom than to the star.
From his central position
man can survey
the grandest works of Nature

with the astronomer,
or the minutest works
with the physicist.

SIR ARTHUR STANLEY

Let's--just for the heck of it--break life into its component parts; or, maybe, part. When we decide to "get small," atoms are a good place to start.

To get an idea of how small an atom is, imagine a cherry. Then imagine trillions and trillions of cherries, all in one enormous ball. Imagine a ball the size of the earth, all made up of cherries.

This large ball of cherries the size of the earth would be a fairly accurate model of the atomic structure of an orange. That is, if you enlarged an orange until it was the size of the earth, the atoms in that very big orange would be the size of cherries. And the cherries would be so far apart, you could see right through it.

Another demonstration of an atom's smallness: pure gold can be pounded very thin. When pounded extremely thin, it's known as gold leaf. Gold leaf is about five gold atoms thick. If this book, and three others just as thick, were printed on gold leaf, the total thickness of all four books would be about as thick as a single sheet of paper.

Remember those models of atoms they showed us in school? They looked like little solar systems. (In some schools, they probably used the same model for both atoms *and* solar systems.) In the middle were the protons and neutrons; this, the teacher explained, formed the nucleus. Then, only slightly smaller than the nucleus, and about twelve inches away, dangling at the end of what looked like a coat hanger wire, was the electron.

A physicist is an atom's way
of knowing about atoms.

GEORGE WALD

In fact, the whole "solar system" model of an atom has been abandoned. Think of the proton and neutron in the center, surrounded by a *cloud*. That cloud would be the electron (or electrons) of the atom.

In addition, the *scale* of the high-school model was, to say the least, inaccurate. If the nucleus of the atom were, say, the size of a tennis

ball, the electron cloud would be from one to ten *miles* thick in all directions (depending on the size of the atom). If the nucleus were the size of a tennis ball, the atom would be from two to twenty miles in diameter.

To give you another idea of the size: imagine the dome of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. (If you haven't been to St. Peter's, imagine the biggest dome you have ever seen and make it bigger.) If a hydrogen atom were the size of St. Peter's dome, the nucleus would be the size of a grain of salt.

But an atom with a nucleus the size of a grain of salt only *appears to be* the size of St. Peter's dome. The nucleus is 99.95 percent of the mass ("solid stuff") of the atom. The rest of the atom is nothing, appearing to be much, much more--a grain of salt pretending to be a dome.

The *Encyclopdia Britannica* tells us, "An atom (and thus all matter) is mostly empty space."

How does an atom do this? *Energy.* The protons and neutrons in the nucleus of the atom move about at 40,000 miles per *second*. The electron cloud is full of (not surprisingly) *electrical* energy.

Not only is the empty space *within* atoms large, but the space *between* atoms--the space in which there is nothing at all--is enormous.

This doesn't fit our perception of--or even belief about--things at all. As *Britannica* tells us, "Some daily life concepts are no longer valid on the atomic scale." Indeed.

For example, there is more empty space in the book you're holding than book. The atoms of the book give the *illusion* of solid ink on solid paper.

The important thing in science is
not so much to obtain new facts
as to discover new ways
of thinking about them.

SIR WILLIAM BRAGG

They're not. It's just an illusion. If the electricity in the electron cloud were switched off, even for an instant, this book would crumble into atomic dust--an amount of dust not even visible to the naked eye. This book would appear to disappear. Poof.

The same is true of whatever you're sitting (or lying) on, everything in the room or vehicle you're currently in, and everything you've ever seen, touched, heard, tasted, or smelled.

It is also, by the way, true of your body.

Welcome to life.

The most incomprehensible thing
about the world is that
it is comprehensible.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

What Did That Last Chapter Mean, Anyway?

Any sufficiently
advanced technology
is indistinguishable
from magic.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

So what does a chapter on atomic physics have to do with a book on life? A few facts can be gleaned from the study of the atom: 1. Contrary to our perception and belief, there is more nothing than something, even in things that appear to have more something than nothing. 2. Everything is always in motion, even things that don't appear to have moved in millions of years. 3. The perception that things are solid and stationary is an illusion.

Physicist Fritjof Capra, in *The Tao of Physics:*

As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated "basic building blocks," but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole. These relations always include the observer in an essential way. The human observer constitutes the final link in the chain of the observational processes, and the properties of any atomic object can be understood only in terms of the object's interaction with the observer.

Capra concludes, "In atomic physics, we can never speak of nature without, at the same time, speaking of ourselves."

Life, it turns out, is not a struggle; it's a wiggle.

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION TO LIFE

Which Is More Important--Heredity or Eliot?

My cousin has
great changes coming:
One day he'll
wake up with wings.

"THE CATERPILLAR SONG"
INCREDIBLE STRING BAND

Remember the old question: "Which is more important--heredity or environment?" I say old question when, perhaps, I should say obsolete question. The question has been answered and, in time, will be asked about as often as "Is the world flat or round?" "Is sex possible after forty?" "Does McDonald's `do it all for you,' or do they do it all for money?"

The answers to these questions (in order) are: heredity, round, I don't remember, and money.

An elaborate study tracked down identical twins separated at birth. Each twin had grown up in a different environment, but had the same genetics. In some cases, the environments were very different--one twin grew up in poverty, the other in luxury; one with stern parents, the other with permissive parents; one in a devoutly religious family, the other in a devoutly indifferent family; one in a "broken" home, the other in a "happy"

home. Some were even raised in other cultures and grew up speaking different native languages.

The twins were given tests that measured more than one hundred variables of personality. What the study found was that the identical twins were, in a word, identical--they were, essentially, the same person.

Yes, of course, each had individual distinctions--just as there is something that distinguishes one seagull from another--but, when compared to other people (like comparing seagulls to skylarks), identical twins were far more the same than different.

With me,
it's just a genetic
dissatisfaction with everything.

Woody Allen

A seagull is a seagull is a seagull, a rose is a rose is a rose, you are you are you. This study merely supports numerous other studies that have gradually, gradually, gradually traced the "roots" of who we are to younger and younger ages. Studies indicated the basic personality was formed before puberty, then before age five, then before two, then sometime between the first Lamaze class and the father's yelling: "I can't take any more of this! I need something for the pain!"

In one human trait after another, what was once considered a "choice" now is seen as the result of the birth-parents' tossing the old genetic dice. Such characteristics as body weight, sexual preference, and shopping at K-Mart seem to be as genetically based as eye color, height, and intelligence. Yes, we can "choose" to go against genetics but usually with great difficulty. K-Mart shoppers are simply never going to be happy shopping exclusively at Neiman Marcus--and vice versa. (Especially vice versa. More vice versa than verse vica.)

Yes, severe extremes in the environment will override genetics--extended malnutrition in childhood, for example, can stunt growth, just as extreme societal prejudice can make those with more than the "normal" number of fat cells near-anorexic or make homosexuals mimic heterosexuality.

(The latter two examples have much to do with the individuals' need for approval and their willingness to conform as they do with social pressures. There are, after all, any number of happy people and gay homosexuals. The nned for approval and willingness to conform, however, are

most likely, yes, genetic.)

"But studies prove that troubled youths come from troubled homes." Yes, troubled youths are more likely to come from troubled homes just as chickens tend to come from chicken coops, but that doesn't mean troubled homes create troubled youths any more than chicken coops create chickens. Troubled youths come from troubled homes because they inherited troubled genes from the troubled homemakers.

What more felicity
can fall to creaturE,
Than to enjoy delight
with liberty.

EDMUND SPENSER THE FATE OF THE BUTTERFLY
1591

Frankly, the common belief that environment is more important than heredity--or even that the two are equally important--is but another example of our habit, as humans, of setting ourselves above nature. We are a *part* of nature. We grow from it; we're not placed in it. Consequently, the laws of nature apply to us as much as they apply to snowflakes, water buffalo, and Spam. And one of nature's most fundamental laws is that of genetics. Plant a radish seed; get a radish.

If you're an orange blossom, don't look forward to being an apple. If you're a rose, you come with thorns.

All of this came home--literally--when I ordered a see-the- miracle-of-nature- and-grow- your-own -butterflies kit. A week later the UPS driver delivered a plastic cup with some green gunk on the bottom and on top of the green gunk were five black, half-inch-long pipe-cleaners. The pipe cleaners, I discovered, were caterpillars. *These things* were going to become butterflies? Yeah, right.

The black pipe cleaners moved around and ate the green gunk and got bigger. I was still quite certain I had been sent the grow-your-own-pipe-cleaners kit by mistake.

After about ten days--as if someone had rung a bell--all the caterpillars climbed to the top of the cup, attached themselves to the lid, and promptly turned into chrysalises. On each chrysalis was gold--iridescent,

reflective, shiny gold! How on earth did black pipe-cleaners eating green gunk make *gold?*

No time to marvel, because B-Day was on its way, and I had to put together the supplied butterfly house "which any child can assemble in less than thirty minutes." Of course, it took me half a day, and even then I had to accept the fact that my butterflies were going to be raised in substandard housing. (I never did find tab "C" which was supposed to go into slot "K.")

The butterfly glow
in the narrow flute from which
the morning-glory opens
blue and cool on a hot morning.

DENISE LEVERTOV

Into their new slum housing went the chrysalises, out of which, after another ten days and another inaudible (to me) alarm bell--came *butterflies*. Painted lady butterflies. On the wings were every color of the rainbow. How on earth did every color of the rainbow come from black caterpillars eating green gunk?

The answer to "how on earth?" is that they are of the earth. That's just what painted lady caterpillars *do.* It's in their genetic code. It's determined the moment the egg is fertilized. It's not just when and how to turn from black pipe-cleaner to iridescent gold chrysalis to multicolored butterfly; the code also includes what to eat, how to eat, how to mate, when to mate, and when and where to migrate.

My gracious--migration. Painted lady butterflies gather by the millions--again at a time determined by one of those inaudible bells--and fly south together--often more than *two thousand miles!* In the spring, they gather again and fly back home.

All the painted lady butterfly needs to know--from eating to migrating to making other painted lady butterflies--is contained within the fertilized egg. It's run by the law of genetics--as is almost every other portion of the living world. Even us.

Perhaps I should say especially us. Imagine all the painted lady butterfly "knows" before it even hatches itself; then imagine how much more *we* must "know" with our more intricate and elaborate genetic make-up. Yes, we are

different from butterflies--not because we chose to be different, but because we are different.

Are human beings superior to butterflies? It depends on your criteria. When it comes to eating three hot dogs in less than five minutes, humans are far superior to butterflies. But when it comes to flying...*

*(The pipe cleaners and green gunk--along with build- it-yourself- substandard- butterfly housing--are available from Insect Lore Products, P.O. Box 1535, Shafter, CA 93263. I do *not* get a royalty. I will *not* be making an infomercial for them. I'll leave that to Cher.)

I do not know whether
I was then a man dreaming
I was a butterfly,
or whether I am now a butterfly
dreaming I am a man.

CHUANG-TZU
369-286 B.C.

PAINTED LADY LESSON #1:
The only reasonable course of action seems to be acceptance.

PAINTED LADY LESSON #2:
Yes, we *can* make change, but change is *very* expensive and our resources *are* limited. *Choose wisely* what to change; accept the rest.

PAINTED LADY LESSON #3:
Eat the green gunk, hang in there, listen for the alarm bells, and there will be golden, fluttering, soaring surprises.

PAINTED LADY LESSON #4: It is easier to wear and improve the genes you already have than to go to the Gap and try to get another pair.

Does this mean be complacent? Not at all. There is so much *not* inherited; so much to be *learned*. All the great thoughts of those who went before, for example. T. S. Eliot wrote that tradition "cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labor" (Some of that "great labor" might include deciphering the works of T. S. Eliot. He is, by his own admission, "Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse." Like all good learning, however, understanding Eliot *is* worth the effort).

Poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into its meaning.

But, Eliot continues: "Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood." That's a relief. Capturing the poem is not:

Each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling.

One cannot write poetry for fame, and certainly not for *money*. (What are the odds Andrew Lloyd Webber will take *your* poetry and turn it into *Cats?)*

As things are, and as fundamentally they must always be, poetry is not a career, but a mug's game. No honest poet can ever feel quite sure of the permanent value of what he has written: he may have wasted his time and messed up his life for nothing.

Poetry is not an assertion of truth,
but the making of that truth
more real to us.

T. S. ELIOT

Well, let's take a glimpse at this mug's game. (Each paragraph is an excerpt from an Eliot poem--my apologies to Eliot for their selection and arrangement.)

Wavering between the profit and the loss
In this brief transit where the dreams cross
The dreamcrossed twilight
between birth and dying.
Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

The readers of the *Boston Evening Transcript*
Sway in the wind like a field of ripe corn.

What is hell?
Hell is oneself,
Hell is alone, the other figures in it
Merely projections.

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons.

Who then devised the torment? Love.
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.
We only live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire.

Uncorseted, her friendly bust
Gives promise of pneumatic bliss.

Between the conception and the creation
Between the emotion and the response
Falls the Shadow.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

Stand on the highest pavement of the stair--
Lean on a garden urn--
Weave, weave the sunlight in your hair.

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table.

O hidden under the dove's wing,
hidden in the turtle's breast,
Under the palmtree at noon,
under the running water
At the still point of the turning world.
O hidden.

Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance,
and there is only the dance.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Note how this chapter metamorphosed?

'Tis but a gift of butterflies.

Are Human Beings Fundamentally Good or Fundamentally Evil?

My answer: good.

My proof? I could quote philosophers, psychologists, and poets, but then those who believe humans are fundamentally evil can quote just as many philosophers, psychologists, and poets.

My proof, such as it is, is a simple one. It returns to the source of human life: an infant.

The only good is knowledge
and the only evil
is ignorance.

SOCRATES

When you look into the eyes of an infant, what do you see? I've looked into a few, and I have yet to see fundamental evil radiating from a baby's eyes. There seems to be purity, joy, brightness, splendor, sparkle, marvel, happiness--you know: good.

And yet, if we are fundamentally good, why is it when we relax and listen to our thoughts or feel our emotions or sense our bodies, we often find so much rubbish? Here's my explanation for that, in the form of a diagram.

When choosing
between two evils,
I always like to try
the one I've never tried before.

MAE WEST

Babies are like sponges; they absorb everything. By the time they are two years old, they have observed more than 8,000 hours of life: the good, the bad, the ugly--plus whatever was on TV.

As they begin to act out this array of observations, they are informed--sometimes in no uncertain terms--that some behavior is "good," some is "bad," and "around here we don't do the bad, we only do the good."

What do I mean by "evil?" Evil is unnecessary life experience. Whatever we *need* to do to learn a lesson is *life* --even if it's "not fun." When the not-fun continues after the lesson is learned--or the job is done--that's evil. To cut off a dog's tail (when necessary) is life. To do it an inch at a time is evil.

At first, the child has trouble understanding why some things are "right" while others are "wrong." (This stage is often referred to as the Terrible Twos.) But, eventually the child learns--with varying degrees of success--to cover the bad with the good, the wrong with the right.

We are taught to pretend to be good, and when we let the pretense slip, we find evil lurking just below the surface. It's little wonder, then, that most people think their inner self is bad. The struggle to keep up the "good act" is a "never-ending battle for truth, justice, and the American Way."

When people have the patience (and courage) to go beneath the "inner evil," they find, invariably, a sea of peace, calm, and joy. They have reached the inner good that is their true nature.

Ironically, this inner good is often remarkably similar to the "good shell" that was fabricated for them by the Parental Construction Company. The difference here is that, coming from this center, people do good because good is the thing to do, not because they're "supposed to" do good, or because they might get punished if they don't.

Good people are good
because they've come
to wisdom through failure.

WILLIAM SAROYAN

Your friends may think you're, say, a happy person. You might think, "What do they know? If only they knew how unhappy I am inside. I only *pretend* to be happy, and they fall for it. What kind of friends are these?" The truth may be that beneath the unhappiness is a genuine happiness--and

perhaps the happiness your friends see is the genuine happiness, not the pretense of happiness you use as a cover.

This is true of any "good" emotion, thought, or behavior: love, joy, gratitude, enthusiasm, compassion, generosity, tenderness, bravery, cleanliness, reverence, and all the rest.

If you think you're fooling people with your act of goodness, and you think you aren't all that good, maybe the one you're fooling is yourself.

Man's main task in life
is to give birth
to himself,
to become what he
potentially is.

ERICH FROMM

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART TWO

ADVANCED TOOLS FOR EAGER LEARNERS

Be wiser than
other people,
if you can,
but do not
tell them so.

LORD CHESTERFIELD

Life is, if nothing else, a persistent teacher. It will repeat a lesson over and over until it is learned. How does life know we've learned? When we change our behavior. Until then, even if we intellectually "know" something, we haven't really *learned* it. School remains in session.

The good news is that we learn all we need to know--eventually.

For some, however, eventually is not soon enough. If there's something they can learn that will *eventually* make their lives happier, healthier, and more productive, why not learn it *now?* That brings happiness, health, and productivity to us sooner--and it avoids a lot of (perhaps painful) lessons along the way.

Others aren't content with learning only what they "need" to know. "Getting by" is not enough. They want more. They are the "eager learners" who read books with titles such as *LIFE 101*.

Someone once said that the only two things that motivate an enlightened person are love and curiosity. I can't speak for my state of enlightenment,

but I can say that, considering my level of curiosity, it's a good thing I'm not a cat.

What a wonderful
day we've had.
You have learned something,
and I have learned something.
Too bad we didn't
learn it sooner.
We could have
gone to the movies instead.

BALKI BARTOKOMOUS

Anatole France pointed out more than a century ago, "The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards."

But what if we have questions that seemingly can't be answered? When faced with this quandary, I like to comfort myself with this thought of Emerson: "Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable. We must trust the perfection of the creation so far as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy."

"Life was meant to be lived," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in her autobiography, "and curiosity must be kept alive. One must never, for whatever reason, turn his back on life."

This section of the book contains a series of tools designed to keep curiosity alive and thriving. These same tools can also be used to find satisfying answers to the questions you may be curious about. These techniques are designed to accelerate the process of learning.

All of these tools, by the way, are optional. To learn the necessary lessons of life, no one *needs* to know or use any of them. So there's no need to struggle--thinking that if you don't master them your life will be a failure. Experiment with these techniques. Play with them. Have fun.

Also, there's no need to teach these techniques to anyone else--much less *insist* that people relate to you as though they've already mastered them. These skills are electives in the school of life. If you choose to use

any or all of them for *your* accelerated learning, that's fine; but please don't expect--and certainly don't demand--that others accelerate their learning too.

Before we start, let's take a look at why human beings spend so much time struggling *against* learning; why we, as a species, seem so opposed to the exploration of new things.

Haven't you been curious about that?

Why Do We Resist Learning?

The only reason I always
try to meet and know
the parents better
is because it helps me
to forgive their children.

LOUIS JOHANNOT

If we're here to learn, and if we have this seemingly in-built desire to learn (curiosity), why do we resist learning? The classic example is the argument: "Listen to me!" "No, you listen to me!" "No, you listen to me!" And so on.

It seems that somewhere around eighteen (give or take ten years), something in us decides, "That's it, I've had it, I'm done. I know all I need to know. I'm not learning any more."

Why?

Let's return to the idea of the small child being taught about life by his or her parents. Parents are like gods to little children--the source of food, protection, comfort, love.

Also, parents are BIG! They're four to five times bigger than children. Imagine how much respect (awe? fear?) you'd have for someone twenty to thirty feet tall, weighing 500 to 1,000 pounds.

Let's imagine a child--two, three years old--playing in a room. The parents are reading, the child is playing, all is well. After an hour or so, CRASH! The child bumps a table and knocks over a lamp.

Where there once was almost no interaction with the parents, suddenly there is a lot--almost all of it negative. "How many times have we told you." "Can't you do anything right?" "What's the matter with you?" "That was my favorite lamp!" Shame, bad, nasty, no good. This verbal tirade may or may not be reinforced by physical punishment.

I have found the best way
to give advice to your children
is to find out what they want
and then advise them to do it.

HARRY S. TRUMAN

What does the child remember from an evening at home with the folks? Does the child remember the hours spent successfully playing (i.e., no broken anything) while Mommy and Daddy read, or does he or she remember the intense ten minutes of "bad boy," "nasty girl," "shame, shame, shame," after the fall?

The negative, of course. It was loud and it was frightening (imagine a pair of thirty-foot, 1,000-pound gods yelling at you). It was, for the most part, the *only* interaction the child may have had with "the gods" all evening. (Especially if being put to bed early was part of the punishment.)

When a child's primary memory of the communication from his or her parents ("the gods") is "no, don't, stop that, shouldn't, mustn't, shame, bad, bad, bad," what's the child being taught? That he or she can do no good; must be alert for failure at every moment, and still will fail; is a disappointment, a letdown, a failure.

In short, a child begins to believe that he or she is fundamentally not good enough, destined for failure, in the way. In a word, *unworthy.*

There is very little in the traditional educational system to counteract this mistaken belief. If anything, school etches the image even deeper. (If we learned all we needed to know in kindergarten, it was promptly drummed out of us in first grade.) You are taught you must perform, keep

up, and "make the grade," or you aren't worth much. If you *do* work hard at making the grades, some authority figure is bound to ask, "Why are you studying all the time? Why aren't you out playing with the other children? What's wrong with you? Don't you have any friends?"

Catch-22 never had it so good.

Naturally, we can't go around feeling unworthy *all the time.* It hurts too much. So we invent defenses--behaviors that give the *illusion* of safety. Soon we notice that others have not only adopted similar defenses, but have taken their defenses to new and exotic extremes. The school of limitation is in session.

I was thrown out of college
for cheating
on the metaphysics exam;
I looked into the soul
of the boy next to me.

Woody Allen

We begin hanging out with other members of the same club. We are no longer alone. In fact, we start to feel worthy. We have comrades, companions, confidants, and chums.

The club? Club Let's-Hide-Away-From-The-Hurtful-Unworthiness International has four main chapters:

The Rebels

The rebels like to think of themselves as "independent." They have, in fact, merely adopted a knee-jerk reaction to whatever "law" is set before them. They are prime candidates for reverse psychology. ("The best way to keep children from putting beans in their ears is to tell them they must put beans in their ears.") They conform to nonconformity.

MOST FEARED FORTUNE COOKIE: "A youth should be respectful to his elders."

SLOGAN: "Authority, you tell us that we're no good. Well, authority, *you're* no good."

MOTTO (minus the first two words): " and the horse you came in on!"

If the ones who tell you you're no good are no good, then, somehow, that makes you good. Somehow.

The Unconscious

These are the people who seem to be not all there because, for the most part, they're not all there. They're not dumb, mind you; they're just someplace else: a desert island, a rock concert, an ice cream parlor. They are masters of imagination. With authority figures, they do their best to *appear* dumb, drugged, or asleep. The powers that be then become frustrated and leave them alone--precisely what the unconscious want. Very clever.

FAVORITE FORTUNE COOKIE: "To know that you do not know is the best."

SLOGAN: "You can't expect much from me, so you can't criticize me because, uh, um, what was I saying?"

MOTTO: "Huh?"

The more the world criticizes them, the more they retreat to a fantasy world beyond criticism.

A boy becomes an adult
three years before
his parents think he does,
and about two years after
he thinks he does.

LEWIS B. HERSHEY

The Comfort Junkies

All that is (or might be) uncomfortable is avoided (unless avoiding it would be more uncomfortable), and all that might bring comfort (food, TV, Walkmans, drink, drugs, and other distractions) is sought after (unless the seeking after them would be more uncomfortable). In their youth the comfort junkies scarf french fries, then mature into couch potatoes.

MOST FEARED FORTUNE COOKIE: "The scholar who cherishes the love of comfort is not

fit to be deemed a scholar."

SLOGAN: "Comfort at any cost! (Unless it's too expensive.)"

MOTTO (taken from Tolkien): "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort."

They memorize as much of their motto as is comfortable.

The Approval Seekers

The best way to prove worthiness is to have lots of people telling you how wonderful you are. Approval seekers work so hard for other people's approval they have little or no time to seek their own. But their own doesn't matter. They, after all, are unworthy, and what's the worth of an unworthy person's opinion? These people take the opposite tack of the rebels: rebels deem the opinions of others unworthy; approval seekers deem others' opinions *too* worthy. Approval seekers would run for class president, but they're afraid of a backlash, so they usually win treasurer by a landslide.

MOST FEARED FORTUNE COOKIE: "Fine words and an insinuating appearance are seldom associated with true virtue."

SLOGAN: "What can I do for *you* today?"

MOTTO: "Nice sweater!"

Without such people, homecoming floats would never get built.

I'm an experienced woman;
I've been around. . .
Well, all right,
I might not've been around,
but I've been. . .nearby.

MARY RICHARDS
THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW

You've probably been able to place all your friends in their respective clubhouses. If you're having trouble placing yourself, you might ask a few friends *your* approval.

If you reject the idea that you could possibly fit into any category, you're probably a rebel. If you accept your friends' evaluations too readily, you may be looking for approval. If you forget to ask, you're unconscious. If you're afraid to ask, you may be seeking comfort. If a friend says, "You don't fit in any of these; you seem to transcend them all," that person is probably looking for *your* approval.

Most of us tend to pay some dues to each chapter at one time or another, about one aspect of life or another. We may, for example, be rebels when it comes to speed limits, unconscious when it comes to income tax, comfort junkies when it comes to our favorite bad habit, and approval seekers in intimate relationships.

These are also the four major ways people avoid learning. The rebels don't need to learn; the unconscious don't remember why they should; the comfortable find it too risky; and the approval seekers don't want to rock any boats. Most of us have our own personal combination of the four--a little of this and a little of that--that has perhaps kept us from learning all we'd like to know.

How to surmount these ancient barriers? Tools, techniques, and practice, practice, practice. Where do we find these tools? The rest of this book has quite a few.

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART TWO

ADVANCED TOOLS FOR EAGER LEARNERS

Rules as Tools

Rule #1:
Don't sweat
the small stuff.

Rule #2:
It's all small stuff.

DR. MICHAEL MANTELL

One of the most effective tools for eager learners is one of the oldest--and one of the first to be resisted--*rules.*

As soon as we were able--as late as two years old for late-bloomers--we learned how to get around rules. In most cases, rules were treated as the *enemy*, something laid out by an impersonal (and perhaps tyrannical) world, designed to limit us, punish us, or upset us.

It's easy to see how rules could be thought of as the enemy. From a child's point of view, if there were no rules, our parents would never be upset with us. Only when a rule was violated did they withdraw their love. If those rules weren't there, our parents would always love us. Or so goes the logic of a child.

Further, it seemed as though rules were some sort of childhood curse, like chicken pox, mumps, or measles. Adults got to stay up late and watch TV. Adults got to eat two desserts. Adults got to cross the street. Adults

never had to take afternoon naps. "When *can* I do this?" we would ask. "When you're older," we were told.

Rules, we figured, were some temporary malady--like chicken pox or siblings--we had to endure. One fine day, it would all be over. Imagine our surprise as we grew older--three, four, five--when we found that the number and complexity of rules actually *increased*.

Is forbidden
to steal towels, please.
If you are not person to do such
is please not to read notice.

SIGN IN TOKYO HOTEL

Then came that repository of rules itself: school. After the initial shock, we gulped and, to one degree or another, accepted our fate: The rules will continue, unabated, for twelve more years. *Then* they will be over.

Hardly. Many of the childhood rules were internalized--they didn't go away, they just became habits. We didn't play in traffic, not because it was a rule, but because we knew the consequences of playing in traffic. We didn't stay up all night watching TV because we knew how we'd feel in the morning. We didn't have two desserts because--well, maybe we did. But we knew what it would do, and it did.

The confusion about rules when we were young was that some rules were useful to us, and some were not. We were, however, expected to follow *all* of them *or else*. In time, rules we found useful were no longer rules; they became part of us. The ones that didn't become a part of us were "rules," and we hated them (or forgot about them or ignored them or followed them for approval--or some combination of these).

Take walking, for example. Walking is full of rules. Considering the size of our feet and the height of our body, human beings have no business standing at all. Try to get a Barbie doll (or G.I. Joe) to stand up without support--especially in heels. (G.I. Joe has a *very* difficult time in heels.)

If we forget any of the rules of walking, gravity exacts its "punishment." It is swift, unerring, and consistent. So we learn the rules of walking, and we make those rules our own.

The same is true of language, use of our hands, general body coordination, and so on. All the things we weren't born doing, we had to learn. Each has its own set of rules. Once we mastered the rules and made them our own, we forgot the rules and just did it.

Some rules are absolute, some arbitrary. "Keep breathing" is absolute. "Drive on the right side of the road in North America" is arbitrary. There's no special *reason* to drive on the right side of the road--approximately half the world drives on the left. The reason it's a "good" rule is that, as long as everybody follows it, it works. We don't have to decide every time we pass an oncoming car which way to pass it. It saves time, attention, worry, and lives.

Exit according to rule,
first leg and then head.
Remove high heels and synthetic
stockings before evacuation:
Open the door,
take out the recovery line
and throw it away.

RUMANIAN NATIONAL AIRLINES EMERGENCY INSTRUCTIONS

Sometimes rule-following is part of "paying your dues." You may know a better way of doing something-that is, you may have a new rule that's better than the old one-but in order to implement the improved rule, you have to follow the old rule for a while. Once you master the old rule, you are then the master-and masters get to change things. Once you're successful at something, to do it another way is considered innovative. If you've yet to master the old way, it's often seen as rebellion.

I'm certainly not saying "Conform and you'll be happy." To change rules that are already in place takes time, energy, perseverance, and a lot of hard work. You only have so many of these assets at your disposal, so choose with care the rules you want to change.

What I'm suggesting is that you change your *view* of rules. This book is full of "rules." If you treat them the way many people treat rules--with rebellion, unconsciousness, discomfort, or as new ways to gain others' acceptance--these techniques I'm suggesting will probably not be very

useful. They'll just be more "should's," "must's," "ought-to's," and "have-to's."

As I mentioned before, I'm suggesting that you take each suggestion as a suggestion, try it out, see if it works. If it does, use it. Then it's a *tool,* not a rule. If it doesn't, let it go and move on to something that may. Then it's not a rule; it's just a tool that, for whatever reason, you have no use for at this time.

Here are three rules I have found to be the foundation for all the other rules I have adopted for myself. If *rules* is too strong a word, consider them perhaps *guidelines*. They're simple, but I've found that the challenges within them never seem to end.

1. Don't hurt yourself and don't hurt others. This begins at the physical level: don't hit people, don't steal from them, don't hit yourself on the head with a hammer. These are fairly easy to define. Then it moves to a more subtle level: don't ingest things that aren't good for you, stay away from dangerous places, never tell a man named "Killer" his nose is crooked.

It continues on the mental and emotional levels: don't judge yourself or others, worry less, enough already with the guilts and resentments. There always seems to be a subtler level at which we can stop doing harm to ourselves and to others.

The ideas I stand for
are not mine.
I borrowed them from Socrates.
I swiped them from Chesterfield.
I stole them from Jesus.
And I put them in a book.
If you don't like their rules,
whose would you use?

DALE CARNEGIE

2. Take care of yourself so you can help take care of others. Physically: get enough (but not too much) food, enough water, enough exercise, enough rest. Mentally and emotionally: praise yourself for work well done, enjoy each moment, love yourself.

The second part of it, "so you can help take care of others," does not say you *must* help take care of others. It simply states the requirement ("take care of yourself") necessary for helping to take care of others *should you feel so inclined.* If you're not first taking care of yourself, you won't be able to help take care of others. If you don't take care of yourself, in fact, others will eventually be taking care of you.

3. Use everything for your upliftment, learning, and growth. *Everything.* No matter what you do, no matter how stupid, dumb, or damaging you judge it to be, there is a lesson to be learned from it. No matter what happens to you, no matter how unfair, inequitable, or wrong, there's something you can take from the situation and use for your upliftment, learning, or growth.

I'm not saying *intentionally* do silly things so you can learn from the inevitable disaster, or *solicit* evil so you can gain from it. We all do enough silly things and we have enough nastiness done unto us without having to create or invite more.

Remember the Writer's Creed: When the world gives you lemons, write *The Lemon Cookbook.*

There. Those three should keep you busy for, oh, the rest of your life. Explaining the many facets of these rules--and ways you can grow from them--will take me (at least) the remainder of this book.

Participation

Look, I really don't
want to wax philosophic,
but I will say that if you're alive,
you got to flap your arms and legs,
you got to jump around a lot,
you got to make a lot of noise,
because life is the very opposite of death.
And therefore, as I see it,
if you're quiet, you're not living.
You've got to be noisy,
or at least your thoughts should
be noisy and colorful and lively.

MEL BROOKS

One of the greatest--and simplest--tools for learning more and growing more is *doing* more. It may or may not involve more activity. I'm not talking, necessarily, about action but of *involvement*.

When we're involved, we learn more. If you want to learn more, become an eager participant. Take part. Get involved. Plunge in. Embrace new experiences. Partake of life.

It's hard to recommend specific activities; what truly engages one person might be boredom personified to another. The clich, of course, is to recommend taking a walk over watching television. But with the video revolution-122 channels of cable, video rentals, and all the rest--television can now be as involving as anything else.

It's not so much *what* you do, but how you *respond* to what you do. Does the activity involve you in an active way? Does it engage your mind, body, or emotions? (The full engagement of any *one* of these is participation.) Does it challenge you? Does it make you want to do more? If so, you're participating.

"Experimentation is an active science," Claude Bernard pointed out. Experiment. Make your life an active science.

Taking Charge

The last of
the human freedoms-
to choose one's attitude
in any given set of circumstances,
to choose one's own way.

VIKTOR FRANKL

There's a lot of talk in personal growth circles about "taking charge."

I often hear people exclaiming, "I'm going to take charge of that!" "Why aren't you taking charge of this?" "I'm taking charge of my life!"

Taking charge is great, but many people misunderstand what it is, exactly, they can take charge of.

As far as I can tell, the only thing you can take charge of is *the space within your skin.* That's it. Everything (and, especially, everyone) else does not belong to what you can take charge of.

Considering the vastness of the Universe, "the space within your skin" doesn't sound like much. But consider what's in there: your mind, your body, your emotions, and whatever sense of You you've got. That, to paraphrase Sir Thomas More, is not a bad public.

Even if we *could* take charge of people, things, and events outside ourselves, our first job would *still* be to take charge of ourselves.

What would "taking charge" be like?

You would have charge of your thoughts. You would not find yourself thinking about things you didn't want to think about. Your mind would be directed, creative, and positive at all times.

You would have charge of your body. You would be healthy, energetic, fit, glowing, radiant, exuberant, and fully alive.

I'm not
a very good
advertisement
for the American
school system.

DAVID BRINKLEY

You would have charge of your emotions. You would never feel anything you didn't want to feel. You would feel joy, happiness, fulfillment, contentment, enthusiasm, or love whenever you wanted to.

I was thrown out of NYU
for cheating

--with the dean's wife.

Woody Allen

To the degree we do not have charge of our minds, bodies, and emotions, we have our work cut out for us. Do we really have any *extra* time to spend taking charge of *others?*

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PART TWO

ADVANCED TOOLS FOR EAGER LEARNERS

Open the Mind, Strengthen the Body, Fortify the Emotions

Computers are useless.
They can only
give you answers.

PABLO PICASSO

We often let one of The Big Three run the show. What I said earlier of the mind is equally true of the body and emotions--they make great servants, but bad masters.

You probably already know which of The Big Three you identify with most closely; the one you give most influence, the one that most often "leads you into temptation," the one that stops you from doing the things you really want to do--or know it would be best for you to do.

If you let *you* run the show, you'll probably learn more, and, even if you don't, the show will be a lot more enjoyable. (Wouldn't *you* rather choose which videos to watch?) Certainly *listen* to the advice of the mind, body, and emotions, but *you* make the choice, and move in the direction *you* choose. How? Here are some suggestions.

Open the Mind. We've probably all met our fair share of Descarteses running around, the ones who think therefore they am. You may have wanted to tell them, as Zorba told his "mental" young friend, "You think too much, that is your trouble. Clever people and grocers, they *weigh* everything."

These people spend a lot of time in opinions, evaluations, assessments, criticisms, judgments, convictions, laws, rules, procedures, schemes, and making up their minds. Once their mind is made up, however, that's it; there's not much that can change it.

You are a member
of the British royal family.
We are never tired,
and we all love hospitals.

QUEEN MARY

To these folk, one and all, I simply suggest: the mind is like a parachute; it works best when open. The mental amongst us may protest, "California bumper sticker philosophy!" All right, how about this thought from Henry James: "Always keep a window in the attic open; not just cracked: open."

Strengthen the Body. If you're not doing what you want because you're "too tired," or you're worried that some person, germ, or unlucky twist of fate is waiting to do you in, your body's probably got a hold of you.

Some people have a long list of physical reasons why they can't get things done: colds, flus, headaches, pulled this, sprained that, fractured something else. Is that what's troubling you, boobie?

Time to get hold of your body. Get up, get moving, get going. Your body is your vehicle, like your car. If you don't give your body direction, it's about as silly as letting your car choose its own direction. Get it out of the garage, step on the gas, get going.

It's your body: use it or lose it. Providing you give it sufficient rest, your body thrives on activity. Don't let your body stop you from doing what you want. Get up and do it anyway.

Don't wait for the energy before you do something; do and the energy will follow.

Fortify the Emotions. The overly emotional tend to wear their hearts on their sleeves. They act (or, more often, fail to act) because of what they feel. And what do they usually feel? Fear ("What if"), guilt ("If I don't, then"), anger("You didn't"), and disappointment ("Let down, as usual." [*Sings*] "Alone again, naturally").

These people stay away from events in which their emotions *might* be aroused--particularly the emotions of fear, guilt, anger, and disappointment ("hurt feelings"). They *fear* fear, guilt, anger, and disappointment, so they stay away.

To these dear hearts I say: persevere. Press on. Feel the fear and do it anyway. Although the phrase "scared to death" is often used by the emotionals, very few people have actually died from fear. Emotions are not fragile. They are there to be used.

If you do not wish to be prone to anger,
do not feed the habit; give it nothing
which may tend to its increase. At first,
keep quiet and count the days when you
were not angry: "I used to be angry
every day, then every other day: next,
every two, then every three days!" and
if you succeed in passing thirty days,
sacrifice to the gods in thanksgiving.

EPICTETUS

You strengthen your influence over your emotions by using them. Consciously put yourself in situations you want to avoid because of your feelings. Feel all there is to feel and, later, remind yourself that you survived.

After a while, you'll do more than survive: you'll thrive. Because the other side of fear is excitement. And the other side of doing is the reward of achievement, which leads to the positive feelings you seek.

On the other hand, those who tend to be too often too angry at others need to exercise their feelings *less.* When we *don't* exercise something, it grows weaker. If you tend to lean toward resentment when things don't go your way, the next time you're peeved, try this: Rather than exercising your emotions, exercise your body. Run around the block. Do jumping jacks.

Put on some music and dance. This may look silly to your friends and/or co-workers, but they'll probably prefer your taking a brief exercise break over the yelling, screaming, and/or pouting so often done by the easily ticked off.

(More on how to "take charge" of the mind, body, and emotions later.)

Did any of these descriptions sound too close for comfort? At some point or other, we all tend to be too mental or too *un* physical or too emotional. If you've narrowed your specializations down to two and are having trouble choosing between them, maybe you have combined loyalties. This is not uncommon.

Some people, for example, are controlled by a combination of body and emotions. They add emotions to the usual lethargy of the body. These people are often hypochondriacs--and they have all the symptoms to prove it.

Some combine the body with the mind. These people may belong to The Flat Earth Society. They don't do much, and they know precisely *why* they shouldn't. These people would do well to exercise more, both mentally and physically--work crossword puzzles while jogging, for example.

What we have to do is to be
forever curiously testing
new opinions and
courting new impressions.

WALTER PATER
1873

Most common, it seems, are those who combine mind and emotions. When mind and emotions combine, it forms what is commonly referred to as "ego"--not necessarily by Freud's clinical definition, but by the more popular usage, as in "He has an ego problem," or "Her ego's out of control." The mind and emotions are a powerful combination. Learning to direct them only toward good--your own and others'--is a challenge of epic proportions, of epic achievements, and of epic rewards.

A great book is Dr. Albert Ellis's *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything-Yes, Anything!* Available from

Institute for Rational-Emotive Therapy, 45 East 65th Street, New York, New York, 10021.

Practically all human misery
and serious emotional turmoil
are quite unnecessary
-not to mention unethical.
You, unethical?
When you make yourself severely
anxious or depressed,
you are clearly acting against you
and are being unfair and unjust
to yourself.

DR. ALBERT ELLIS

Try New Things

There are seasons,
in human affairs,
when new depths seem to be
broken up in the soul,
when new wants
are unfolded in multitudes,
and a new and undefined good
is thirsted for.
There are periods when to dare,
is the highest wisdom.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING
1829

The more we do, the more we learn. Even if we don't do it "right," we have at least learned another way of *not* doing it. That's learning; that's growth.

So, you don't (yet) know how to do something. So? "For the things we have to learn before we can do them," said Aristotle, "we learn by doing them."

I'm not suggesting you do more of what you already find comfortable. I'm encouraging you to explore the things you find *un* comfortable--the ones you're afraid to do, the ones you don't think you'd have the energy to do, the ones you're sure you'll be judged harshly by others if you do.

The underlying question in trying new things: Would I hurt myself *physically* (not emotionally, not mentally) if I did this? Not *could* (we *could* hurt ourselves doing almost anything), but *would*. If the answer is no, then do it.

It may not be comfortable (it's not supposed to be), and you may make a lot of mistakes (count on it), but you'll learn more than if you sat home in "That indolent but agreeable condition of doing nothing," as Pliny (the Younger) put it.

Acceptance

And that's the way it is.

WALTER CRONKITE

Acceptance is such an important commodity, some have called it "the first law of personal growth."

Acceptance is simply seeing something the way it is and saying, "That's the way it is."

Acceptance is not approval, consent, permission, authorization, sanction, concurrence, agreement, compliance, sympathy, endorsement, confirmation, support, ratification, assistance, advocating, backing, maintaining, authenticating, reinforcing, cultivating, encouraging, furthering, promoting, aiding, abetting, or even *liking* what is.

Acceptance is saying, "It is what it is, and what is is what is." Philosophers from Gertrude Stein ("A rose is a rose is a rose") to Popeye ("I am what I am") have understood acceptance.

Until we truly accept *everything*, we can not see clearly. We will always be looking through the filters of "must's," "should's," "ought-to's," "have-to's," and prejudices.

When reality confronts our notion of what reality *should* be, reality always wins. (Drop something while believing gravity *shouldn't* make it fall. It falls anyway.) We don't like this (that is, we have trouble *accepting* this), so we either struggle with reality and become upset, or turn away from it and become unconscious. If you find yourself upset or unconscious--or alternating between the two--about something, you might ask yourself, "What am I not accepting?"

Education is the ability
to listen to almost anything
without losing your temper
or your self-confidence.

ROBERT FROST

Acceptance is not a state of passivity or inaction. I am not saying you can't change the world, right wrongs, or replace evil with good. Acceptance is, in fact, the first step to successful action. If you don't fully accept a situation precisely the way it is, you will have difficulty changing it. Moreover, if you don't fully accept the situation, you will never really know if the situation *should* be changed.

When you accept, you relax; you let go; you become patient. This is an enjoyable (and effective) place for either participation or departure. To stay and struggle (even for fun things: how many times have you tried *really hard* to have a good time?), or to run away in disgust and/or fear is not the most fulfilling way to live. One or the other, however, is the inevitable result of nonacceptance.

Take a few moments and consider a situation you are not happy with--not your greatest burden in life, just a simple event about which you feel peeved. Now accept *everything* about the situation. Let it be the way it is. Because, after all, it *is* that way, is it not? Also, if you accept it, you will feel better about it.

After accepting it, and everything about it, you probably still won't *like* it, but you may stop hating and/or fearing it. At least you will hate it or fear it a little less.

That's the true value of acceptance: you feel better about life, and about yourself. Everything I've said about acceptance also applies to things you have done (or failed to do). In fact, everything I've said about acceptance applies *especially* to your judgments of you.

All the things you think you should have done, and all the things you think you shouldn't have done, accept them. You did (or didn't) do them. That's reality. That's what happened. No changing the past. You can struggle with the past or pretend it didn't happen or you can accept it. I suggest the latter.

Even a prime-time disciplinarian such as Paul admitted,

For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-this I keep on doing. (Romans 7:19)

And *that* was a man who knew his should's. The next time you find yourself doing something you "shouldn't," or not doing something you "should," you might as well accept it. "If it was good enough for Paul, it's good enough for me."

When you make a mistake,
admit it.
If you don't,
you only
make matters worse.

WARD CLEAVER

While you're at it, you might as well accept all your future transgressions against the "should's," "must's," and "have-to's." You will transgress. Not that I necessarily *endorse* transgression--I simply accept the fact that human beings do *do* such things. Accept your humanity--with all the magnificence and folly inherent in it.

When you're in a state of nonacceptance, it's difficult to learn. A clenched fist cannot receive a gift, and a clenched psyche--grasped tightly against the reality of what *must not be* accepted--cannot easily receive a lesson.

Relax. Accept what's already taken place--whether done by you or something outside of you. Then look for the lesson. You might not enjoy everything that happens in life, but you can enjoy the fact that no matter what happens, "there's a lesson in here someplace."

And don't forget: It's mostly genetic.

The Mirror

I bid him look into
the lives of men
as though into a mirror,
and from others to take
an example for himself.

TERENCE
190-159 B.C.

When we look outside ourselves, we tend to evaluate. These evaluations tell us about the people and things around us.

These evaluations also tell us about *ourselves.*

Whatever we find "true" about the people and things around us, is also true about ourselves. When we evaluate anything outside ourselves, what we are doing is looking into a mirror; the mirror reflects back to us information about ourselves.

You may not always *like* what you see in the mirror; you may not always be comfortable with it; but, if you want to learn about yourself more quickly (and that's what the techniques in this section of the book will help you do), looking at yourself in the mirror of people and things is a valuable tool.

Remember the first time you heard your voice on a tape recorder, or saw yourself on videotape? "I don't sound like that!" "I don't behave that way!" Meanwhile, all your friends are saying, "Yes, that's what you sound like. Yes, that's precisely how you behave."

The first time *I* saw myself on videotape, I wondered how I had any friends at all. In time, with repeated viewings, I learned to accept the images of myself on the tape, and from that point of acceptance, I could begin making changes. (I like to think of them as *improvements.)*

And so it is with the mirror of life. You may not like all you see in the mirror, but until you look into the mirror and accept all that you see *about yourself*, you will not be able to make the changes (improvements) you'd like.

When we see men
of a contrary character,
we should turn inwards
and examine ourselves.

CONFUCIUS

Let's say you look at someone and think, "She is angry, and I don't like that." Could it be you don't like being angry? If you look at someone and say, "He's scared to act. I wish he'd just *do it.* "Could there be something you're scared about; something you wish you would "just do"?

To evaluate and blame others does little good. What do we learn? That we can evaluate and blame? We probably already know we can do that.

Using the mirror, we see that we judge and blame *ourselves.* This is information we can do something about. We can, for example, stop judging and blaming ourselves, or accept the fact that we do judge and blame ourselves.

Sometimes, we have to shift our focus a bit to see what it is about ourselves that's being reflected by others. For example, you may look at someone smoking and not like it. If you looked in that mirror, you might say, "I don't smoke, how does that apply to me?"

What is it you don't like about the other person's smoking? "It's unhealthy." Then, the question is: What do *you* do that's not healthy? "Smoking is inconsiderate." What do *you* do that's inconsiderate? "Smoking is a bad habit." What's your worst habit? "It's a waste of money." How do *you* waste money? "It shows no self-control." Where would you like more self-control?

Get the idea? There are other people's actions, and then there are the judgments we place on those actions. If we move from the *action* we judge, and look at the *judgment*, we usually find a similar judgment we make about ourselves.

It is no use to blame
the looking glass
if your face is awry.

NIKOLAI GOGOL
1836

It's fun to extend this idea beyond people and include things: "This car never works when I want it to." What about you never works when you want it to? "It always rains at the worst possible time." What do you do at the worst possible time? "This steak is too tough." What about you could use a little tenderizing?

The mirror gives you lots of material on which to practice acceptance. You can learn to accept everything you already know about yourself, as well as everything you learn by looking into the mirror of other people's behavior. Your harshest judgments of others are the very ones that will benefit you most if you accept them about yourself.

The mirror also focuses you back on something (that is, *someone)* you *can* do something about. (Ever notice how little effect your judgments have on others?) Which brings us to our first Pop Quiz.

To continually have "good advice" for a world that, for the most part, is completely disinterested in (and sometimes hostile to) advice of any kind:

A. is a waste of time
B. is a waste of good advice
C. tends to alienate self from others
D. tends to alienate others from self
E. promotes self-righteousness in the giver
F. promotes resentment in the receiver
G. all of the above

Guess who could *really use* all that good advice? For the answer, I quote from Michael Jackson's song "Man in the Mirror": "If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and make a change." All that good advice you've been giving to others (or would gladly give them if they only had the intelligence to ask) *finally* has a home. You.

And, as you're the only one you can really change, the only one who can really use all your good advice is you. Isn't it wonderful that the *advice giver* and the *best user* of the advice are the same person? (If you're thinking, "I have to tell so-and-so this. She needs to take some more of her own advice," remember the mirror. It's probably *you* who needs to take more of *your own* advice.)

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

JESUS OF NAZARETH

Again, sometimes we must shift the focus and ask ourselves the larger question in order to see how the advice we give another would fit ourselves.

If your advice to someone is to be more careful with his money, and you don't need that advice, what *do* you need to be more careful about? If your advice to another is to exercise more, and you already exercise a lot, what part of yourself (other than your body) could do with a bit more exercise?

When we look into the mirror of life and see all there is within ourselves that needs improvement, we know we're going to be at it for some time: changing what we can, doing our best with what we can't, accepting and forgiving it all--whenever we remember to do so. (I know, for example, that I'm really writing this book for myself, and if you care to look over my shoulder as I learn from my own "good advice," you are most welcome.)

We also see that whenever we lash out at another, we are really lashing out at ourselves. In this context, to strike another is as silly as striking the bathroom mirror because it's giving us a reflection we don't like. We can only pray that in our striking out, we don't hurt the mirror (especially when that mirror is another person). Could that be where the superstition, "If you break a mirror, it's seven years bad luck," comes from?

Thus far, I've only been talking about the "glass darkly" side of the mirror concept. It does have a lighter side--mirrors also reflect what's good about us.

All the people and things that you find loving, affectionate, caring, devoted, tender, wonderful, compassionate, beautiful, adorable, magnificent, and sacred are simply mirroring to you the loving, affectionate, caring, devoted, tender, wonderful, compassionate, beautiful, adorable, magnificent, and sacred parts of yourself.

The lighter side of the mirror is sometimes more difficult for people to accept than the darker side. "I can see that I'm impatient when I judge someone else for being impatient," you may say, "but when I see the majesty of a mountain, what does that have to do with me?" Everything. That purple mountain majesty is in you, too.

CENTER>*Mirrors should reflect a little before throwing back images.*

JEAN COCTEAU

In fact, it's not really in the mountain at all. What's in the mountain is *rock*. What we, as humans, *project onto* the mountain is majesty. That's one of the reasons the mirror concept works. Most of the time we are projecting *something* onto almost *everything.* When the projection returns to us, we can see it as a reflection--which it is--or we can pretend it is emanating from the thing we projected the reflection onto.

The illusion that what we projected is coming from the thing we projected it onto is deceptive. We tend to get lost in the illusion, just as we tend to get lost in the illusion of images projected on a movie screen. It is, nonetheless, an illusion, and the source of the projection at the movie theater is the projector. The source of the things we think and feel about others is ourselves.

Using the mirror concept, we can begin to recognize the true source of the projections we send out. We begin to see that this person wasn't so bad after all. It was, in fact, what we were projecting onto him. We see that this other person wasn't so wonderful after all. We were merely projecting our wonderfulness upon her.

The more you use it, the more you will probably find the mirror concept works. This is an advanced tool for learning. There is, however, an *advanced* advanced version of this. It's called relationships.

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART TWO

ADVANCED TOOLS FOR EAGER LEARNERS

Relationships

The best mirror is an old friend.

GEORGE HERBERT
1651

Most people seek relationships to *get away from themselves.* But not eager learners! We use everything for our upliftment, learning, and growth--including relationships.

Relationships can be among the most amazing mirrors around. Some relationships are like fun-house mirrors: they reflect an image back to you, but it's liable to be distorted. Other relationships are like magnifying or reducing mirrors: they make everything seem larger or smaller.

Some relationships are accurate mirrors of the darkness inside us; others accurately reflect the light. Occasionally, we find one that reflects both. That's the relationship we either flee from, or "grapple to our hearts with hoops of steel."

I'm using the term *relationship* in the broadest sense. Relationships truly take place inside ourselves. We have a relationship with anyone or anything we encounter. Have you ever read a book by an author you never met and still felt a relationship? Or felt close to a movie character, knowing the character never even existed?

What we do inside ourselves about the people (and things) we choose to be in relationship with can be one of the greatest learning tools we can use--especially when combined with the mirror. This lays the foundation for not just learning, but for enjoyable, productive relationships with others.

Inner Voices

What the inner voice says Will not disappoint the hoping soul.

SCHILLER
1797

It doesn't take much inner listening to know that "in there" there are many voices: speaking, singing, shouting, and whispering. At times, I'm sure I have an entire Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

Some of the "voices" speak; others flash images. Some communicate by feelings, while others communicate through a sense of "knowing." When I say "voices," I include all of these--and any forms of communication I failed to mention.

These voices have information--all of it useful. Some you can use by acting on; some you can use by doing precisely the opposite. It's a matter of knowing whether or not a given voice is on your side.

How do you know? Listen. *Listen* might not be the best word. *Perceive* might be a better word, or *look within,* or *be aware of* your inner process. I'll use *listen,* because it goes along with the analogy of "voices," but know that when I say "listen" I also mean watch, sense, perceive, and be aware of what's going on inside.

Start by listening and keeping track of which voice says what. You can assign them characters, if you like. Here are four of my inner favorites:

The critic. I see this voice as a vulture. Pick, pick, pick, nag, nag, nag. Nothing anyone does is good enough. (Except occasionally when somebody else does something undeniably outstanding, then the vulture says, "Well, *you'll* never do anything *that* good.") Doom and gloom fly with the vulture. It feeds on unworthiness, and its droppings are the doubts, fears, and judgments that keep us from moving toward our goals.

I will neither yield to the song of the siren nor the voice of the hyena, the tears of the crocodile nor the howling of the wolf.

GEORGE CHAPMAN
1605

The praiser. The praiser I see as an eagle. It proudly tells us all the wonderful things we are, have, and do. It generously praises the being, accomplishments, and activities of others. It's the one that lets us know we are worthy *no matter what,* and that our worth does not need to be proven, earned, or defended. We are worthy just because we *are*. All that we are is fine just the way it is. It flies on the wings of grace and gratitude. It nurtures our very soul.

The dummy. The dummy is a turkey. It's the one who answers quickly and loudly, "I don't know," to almost any question. The turkey is the one that keeps us doing all those stupid things we do, and then say, "Darn! I knew better!" We may know better, but no one told the turkey. Turkeys do not fly. If you leave them out in the rain they will drown. They have nothing to be thankful for on Thanksgiving.

The grower. The grower is like an egg. An egg? Yes, as W. S. Gilbert said, "As innocent as a new-laid egg." That's one of the attributes of growth--each moment is new, fresh, and innocent. An egg also contains all the potential for future growth. As Hans Christian Andersen pointed out, "His own image was no longer the reflection of a clumsy, dirty, gray bird, ugly and offensive. He himself was a swan! Being born in a duck yard does not matter, if only you are hatched from a swan's egg." Our grower knows who we are and the kind of bird in the egg (HINT: It's no vulture). It has sufficient self-love to keep itself warm and cozy while gestating. It knows the hatching will take place at precisely the right moment. It is content and divinely patient until then. As Robert Burns wrote of his egg, "The voice of Nature loudly cries, / And many a message from the skies, / That something in us never dies."

The voice of the turtledove speaks out. It says: Day breaks, which way are you going? Lay off, little bird, must you so scold me? I found my lover on his bed, and my heart was sweet to excess.

LOVE SONGS OF THE NEW KINGDOM
1550-1080 B.C.

It's a good idea to listen to *what* the voices say, not to *how* they say it. As Lord Byron reminds us, "The Devil hath not, / in all his quiver's choice, / An arrow for the heart like a sweet voice." And Freud, a century later, wrote, "The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not

rest until it has gained a hearing. Ultimately, after endlessly repeated rebuffs, it succeeds. This is one of the few points in which one may be optimistic about the future of mankind, but in itself it signifies not a little."

If all these birds in our brains are too much for you, perhaps you could use the metaphor of tuning a radio, or changing channels on a television. Once you tune into your own network of wisdom, you'll have guidance that's sure, clear, and direct.

I thank you for your voices, thank you, Your most sweet voices.

SHAKESPEARE

Accountability

More than any time in history mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness, the other to total extinction. Let us pray that we have the wisdom to choose correctly.

Woody Allen

To the degree the events of the world happen *to* us, we are powerless pawns in a game of chance. The most we can do is hope, have lots of insurance, and buy emergency food supplies.

To the degree we know that *we* have *something* to do with what happens to us, we gain authority, influence, and control over our lives. We see that by changing our attitudes and actions, we can change what happens to us.

In a word, we become accountable.

When something happens to you, you can explore it and probably see that you had *something* to do with its taking place. You either created it, promoted it, or--at the very least--*allowed* it. (To remember the words *create, promote, and allow,* just remember C.P.A. = accountant = accountability.)

When looking for areas of accountability, please don't start with the biggest disaster of your life. Start with the daily slings and arrows that flesh is heir to. Looking for accountability is like exercise--don't try

to run a marathon if, like me, you've been sedentary for twenty years (and supine the twenty years before that).

Pick a simple "it happened to me" event--misplacing your keys, the plumber not showing up, running out of gas--and see how you *might* have had *something* to do with creating, promoting, or allowing it to happen. Helpful hints:

1. Go back in time. We love to begin our "victim stories" at the point "it" starts happening *to* us--when the you-know-what hits the fan, and the fan is running. If you start at an earlier point, however, you see that you promised yourself to always put your keys in the same place but didn't, the plumber was not known for his reliability, and the low-gas indicator light on your car had been on for so long you thought your car was solar-powered.

Well, if you've got work to do, Wallace, I don't want to interfere. I was reading an article in the paper the other day where a certain amount of responsibility around the home was good character training. Good-bye, Mr. and Mrs. Cleaver.

EDDIE HASKELL
Leave It To Beaver

2. What was I pretending not to know? What intuitive flashes did you ignore? "I'd better get some spare keys made," as you passed the hardware store a month ago? "This guy's not going to show," when you first spoke to the plumber? "I'd better get some gas," as you passed the thirty-fifth station since the gas-indicator light came on? We all *pretend* to know less than we really know.

Into all this comes a perfectly good word that has been given a bad rap--*responsibility.* Responsibility simply means the *ability* to *respond.* Most people, however, use it to mean blame: "Who's responsible for this!"

In any situation, we have the ability to respond, and our response will make the situation either better or worse. Whichever way it goes, we have the ability to respond again. And again. And again. By exercising our ability to respond, and watching the results closely, we can, if we choose, lift almost any situation.

One ability to respond we always have is how we react *inside* to what's going on *outside*. The world can be falling apart around us; that doesn't mean we have to fall apart ourselves. It's okay to feel good when things go bad. (See the chapter "Taking Charge.")

Honest criticism is hard to take, particularly from a relative, a friend, an acquaintance, or a stranger.

FRANKLIN P. JONES

True accountability has three parts. First, acknowledge that you have *something* to do with what's happened. Even if you're not sure what that might be, ask yourself, "How *might I* have created, promoted, or allowed this?" The answer may surprise you.

Second, explore your response options. In other words, become response-able.

Third, take a corrective action. The more accountability you found at the first step, the more corrective action you may want to take. On the other hand, your corrective action might be getting out of the way and letting those who are more accountable than you take care of things--if you spilt the glass of milk, clean up the milk; if a milk truck spills milk all over the highway, get off the highway.

And remember: you create, promote, or allow all the *good* things that happen to you, too.

There is no human problem which could not be solved if people would simply do as I advise.

GORE VIDAL

Good Mourning

When an emotional injury takes place, the body begins a process as natural as the healing of a physical wound. Let the process happen. Trust that nature will do the healing. Know that the pain will pass and, when it passes, you will be stronger, happier, more sensitive and aware.

HOW TO SURVIVE THE LOSS OF A LOVE

This is a lifetime of good-byes. In our time, we will say good-bye to cherished people, things, and ideas. Eventually, we say good-bye to life itself with our death. Learn to say a good good-bye. Allow yourself to mourn each loss. As with a physical wound, the body has its own schedule for healing. It will tell you when it has healed.

Understanding the process of recovering from an emotional wound is valuable--not necessarily as a technique for accelerating the healing

process--but more as an assurance that, no matter what stage of recovery you are in, all is well.

There are three distinct, yet overlapping, phases of recovery. We go through each phase no matter what the loss. The only difference is duration and intensity of feeling. In a minor loss, we can experience all three stages in a few minutes. In a major loss, the recovery process can take years.

The first stage is shock/denial/numbness. Our body and emotions numb themselves to the pain. The mind denies the loss. Often, the first words we utter after hearing of a loss are "Oh, no," or "This can't be."

The second stage is fear/anger/depression. We are angry at whatever or whoever caused the loss (including the person who left). We often turn the anger against ourselves and feel guilt over something we did or did not do. (This assignment of blame, either outer or inner, is not always rational.) The depression stage of recovery is the sadness often associated with loss: the tears, the hurt, the desolation. We fear the pain will never end; that we will never love or be loved again.

In the darkest hour the soul is replenished and given strength to continue and endure.

HEART WARRIOR CHOSA

The third stage is understanding/acceptance/moving on. We realize that life goes on, that loss is a part of life, and that our life can and will be complete without the presence of what was lost. We also realize, by going through the first two stages of recovery, we have learned a great deal about ourselves, and we are a better person for the experience.

If we don't allow ourselves the time to heal, some of our ability to experience life is frozen--locked away--and is unavailable for the "up" experiences we enjoy: happiness, contentment, love. The part of us that feels the anger and depression is the same part that feels peace and love. If you refuse to feel the anger and the pain of a loss, you will not be able to feel anything else until that area heals.

In other words, stay out of your own way. Let yourself feel bad if you want to feel bad. Feel joy, too. Healing is taking place.

Give yourself the gift of healing.

You might want to read *How to Survive the Loss of a Love* (by Melba Colgrove, Ph.D., Harold Bloomfield, M.D., and me. Please click here or call 1-800-LIFE-101).

Learn to Let Go

I don't want the cheese, I just want to get out of the trap.

SPANISH PROVERB

How does one avoid loss in the first place? Contrary to popular belief, it's not *attachment* that causes loss--attachment feels fine. It's *de*tachment that hurts. Learn to let go.

Some suggest that to avoid loss, one should never be attached to anything. They give the example of a hand in water: when the hand is removed from the water, the hand leaves no impression. These people say the reason the hand leaves no trace in the water is because the water is not attached to the hand.

On the contrary, while the hand is in the water, it is *very* attached to the hand--surrounding, enfolding, and embracing it. Allow yourself to experience life as fully as water experiences the hand; then, as completely, let go.

Yes, the water leaves a little of itself on the departing hand, as we leave a little of ourselves with the people and things we touch. For the most part, however, when it comes time to go, let go.

The hand can no more hold the water than the water can hold the hand. As soon as one "wants" to leave, there is no attachment. Hand and water both accept the inevitability, and part "clean."

There is a title for a book on raising children I've always liked: *Hold Them Very Close, and Let Them Go.* This I find good advice for all experiences:

Hold them very close, and let them go.

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LIFE 101

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PART TWO

ADVANCED TOOLS FOR EAGER LEARNERS

Observation

You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not even wait, be quite still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet.

FRANZ KAFKA

You might think of observation as a meditation of acceptance. You sit and simply accept *everything* that happens, both inner and outer. Consider: almost the only time you want to respond to something outside yourself is when something *inside* demands it.

What is that inner demand? What is the voice (or voices) that insists you do this, or run away from that? Why do you sometimes follow that voice automatically--maybe even unconsciously? The answers to these questions lie in observation.

To observe, don't *do* anything; simply notice the inner process. The voices demanding you do this, move there, or scratch whatever may rise to screaming crescendo. Don't do anything; continue to observe.

At first, observation is best practiced alone. Set a timer. Start with, say, five minutes and build up. Sit in a comfortable position, close your eyes, and tell yourself, "I'm not going to move my body until the timer goes off." Then sit and observe.

The inner voices may start quietly, but as they feel "ignored," they tend to get louder. One may want you to shift your position. Don't. Observe

the voice demanding that you shift. One may want you to scratch an itch. Don't. Observe the itch; observe the emotional reaction to not scratching the itch. ("It's my body, and I can scratch it if I want to!") Observe it all. If the phone rings, observe the desire to answer it. Don't answer it. Observe it. Observe your inner reaction to an outer ringing.

If you resist evil, as soon as it's gone, you'll fold.

KEN KESEY

Observation may sound easy on paper. The inner voices that don't want to lose control often say at this point, "That would be no problem for us; we don't need to do that exercise." Try it and see.

As we increase the amount of time we observe while sitting still, we can then start observing while moving around.

Time for a Pop Quiz!

Observation shows us:

A. our inner reactions to outer experiences
B. that it's our *reaction* to what happens around us, not what happens around us, that motivates us
C. the demands the voices inside us make
D. that we don't have to do anything with, to, or about the voices
E. that we don't have to do anything about most outer experiences
F. all of the above

Observation leads us to a point of neutrality--a place where we don't *have to* react, either positively or negatively, to any situation. We simply *are.*

Neutrality is not neuter, nor is it like "Neutral" in a car. *We* can engage our gears and move ahead *and* remain neutral. In fact, when we're not reacting--almost reflexively--to this, that, and everything, our action becomes more effective. We can maintain an inner calm and still be dynamically involved.

Another way of viewing this: observation disconnects our "buttons." We know that when someone "pushes our button," we react. Push, react. Push, react. Push, react. We are no longer in control; the person or thing pushing the button is.

Through observation, we notice that it's not the *pushing* of the button, but our *reaction* to the pushing that causes our response. Eventually, by intentionally not responding and simply observing, we dissolve the push-react connection. (We will discuss in Parts Four and Five ways of reconnecting the buttons to the responses *you* want.)

Every man has one thing he can do better than anyone else and usually it is reading his own handwriting.

G. NORMAN COLLIE

Think of "observing" as "obviously serving" yourself, and "neutral" as "new trails" of freedom, fun, and adventure.

Trying to define yourself is like trying to bite your own teeth.

ALAN WATTS

Keep a Record of Your Progress

I hear that you're building Your house deep in the desert. Are you living for nothing now? I hope you're keeping Some kind of record.

LEONARD COHEN
"FAMOUS BLUE RAINCOAT"

Record each day, in some way:

- The lessons you learn
- The good that you do
- The good that happens to you
- The insights you have
- Anything else that seems of importance or interest

The "classical" way of recording such things is, of course, a journal, or a diary. ("Keep a diary, and someday your diary will keep you."--Mae West.) Your record-keeping need not, however, be that formal. You might have a box into which you toss mementos, letters, matchbook covers (etc.), and dated notes to yourself.

In this electronic age, you might keep a file in your computer. Using your word processor, you can include copies of your best letters, poems, etc.

in your journal file, and then use the best from your electronic journal in letters, manuscripts, and so on.

You could use a tape recorder and "debrief" yourself each evening, or take one along and record things "as they happen."

To be one's self, and unafraid whether right or wrong, is more admirable than the easy cowardice of surrender to conformity.

IRVING WALLACE

You could try a video log: sit in front of a video camera each day and talk about the previous twenty-four hours, or record a voice-over as the camera explores the physical memorabilia of the day.

The key here, as with all my suggestions (and, for that matter, life itself), is flexibility and fun.

A second key: do whatever you'll *consistently do*. Don't start an Epic Production that will be abandoned in a short while (with the best intentions of returning to it, of course). Build up to that. For now, you might start by scribbling a note or two in the margins of this book as you go along.

Creativity is a drug I cannot live without.

CECIL B. DEMILLE

Light

I'm going to turn on the light, and we'll be two people in a room looking at each other and wondering why on earth we were afraid of the dark.

GALE WILHELM

If you've used the light before, you know whether or not it works for you. This will be a reminder. If you've never used light, then consider this chapter the parameters of an experiment. Please neither believe nor disbelieve that this tool is effective; simply try it in a variety of situations, and see what happens.

Using the light is very easy. You simply ask that the light (you can imagine it as a clear, pure white light) be sent somewhere for the highest good of all concerned. That's it. That's using the light.

In fact, light can't be "sent"--it's all around all the time everywhere anyway. In a sense, it's as silly to "send" light as it is to "send" air. (When I was traveling in Israel, however, I did buy a can of "Air From the Holy Land.") We do ask the light that's already there (or here) to "do its thing" for the highest good.

How do we know the light "worked"? Sometimes the situation changes, sometimes our attitude about the situation changes, and sometimes both.

Things may not change the way we *want* them to change. The light is not a bellhop in the sky. It will not do what you want at the expense of others--or yourself. As Oscar Wilde pointed out, "When the gods choose to punish us, they merely answer our prayers." To have *all* of our desires fulfilled would be a curse.

That's where the "highest good" comes in. We don't always know what the highest good is. (We often *think* we do or *feel* we do--but haven't our thoughts and feelings been wrong in the past?) That's why I suggest that, when you use the light, you add "...for the highest good of all concerned." The "highest good" is the safety clause. We don't want to play Sorcerer's Apprentice with our--or others'--lives.

Man is his own star, and the soul that can Render an honest and a perfect man Commands all light, all influence, all fate.

JOHN FLETCHER
1647

Using the light doesn't require an elaborate ritual or procedure. It takes almost no time. You can get it down to three words: "light, highest good." If you're concerned about someone or something, add "light, highest good" to the concern, and let it go. Then, if you so choose, do *something* about improving the situation. If you choose not to get physically involved, send the light and let it go. You've done all that you can do, which, you may find, is quite a lot.

In what situations can you use the light? In what situations can you use air? I can't imagine a situation in which you *couldn't* use the light. Just before dropping off to sleep, some people ask for the light to surround, fill, protect, bless, and heal them, for their highest good and the highest good of all concerned. When they wake up, they ask the light not only to

be with them, but also to go ahead of them, preparing the day for their highest good.

Using light is not a religion, any more than using air is a religion. People who claim light as an exclusive part of their doctrine might as well claim that only its believers can enjoy the benefits of air. The light can be used as an adjunct to any religious or spiritual path you are on, or it can be used in a purely secular way.

Eventually, using the light becomes as automatic as breathing.

Visualization

See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds, With Joy and Love triumphing.

JOHN MILTON
1667

In a sense, it's unfortunate the term *visualization* has become the almost-exclusive word for any work done using the imagination. The word *visual* is, of course, connected to sight. People try a moment or two of "*visual*ization," say they never "saw" anything, and give up. When they hear about the wonders of visualization, they assume it's another one of "those things" that other people can do, but they can't.

Actually, a great many people never "see" a thing during visualization. Others have murky images. Some only have a "sense" or feeling of things. Others hear the "images." Few people, in fact, see the crisp, clear, Technicolor images we assume most everybody (but us) sees.

We all "visualize." If I asked you to draw a circle, you could do it. A circle is a visual thing. You had to "envision" it. However you "saw" the circle in your imagination, that's how you'll "see" while visualizing.

Don't remember how you "saw" the circle? Try a triangle. How about a square? "It's just *there*," you might say. Or maybe you notice, "It takes a little while, but then it appears." Either one is fine.

Now graduate school. Think of the Eiffel Tower. The Statue of Liberty. The moon. An orange. A lemon. A lake. A rose. What color is the rose? Is it a red, red rose, or are you from Texas? Some get an "image" instantly, others take as long as five seconds each. (And five seconds can seem like

a long time.) However you got these--be it a sense, feeling, verbal description, or an image--that's how you visualize.

The real distinction is between those who adapt their purposes to reality and those who seek to mould reality in the light of their purposes.

HENRY KISSINGER

Most of us spend a great deal of time believing *visual lies.* We have an image of our unworthiness, believe it, and that gives birth to one imagined failure after another. The unworthiness is a lie, but the projected failures can come true: what we focus on, we can become.

With visualization, you begin to tell yourself visual truths.

There is only one admirable form of the imagination: the imagination that is so intense that it creates a new reality, that it makes things happen, whether it be a political thing or a social thing or a work of art.

SEAN O'FAOLAIN

The Sanctuary

I discovered the "something" in "nothing."

BARBRA STREISAND

A sanctuary is an inner retreat you build with visualization in your imagination. Here you can discover the truth about yourself, and work to affirm it. ("Make it firm.")

I call it a sanctuary. Some call it a workshop, or an inner classroom. You can call it whatever word gives you the sense of asylum, harbor, haven, oasis, shelter--a place you can go to learn your lessons in peace and harmony, or just take a rest and get away from it all.

There are absolutely no limits to your sanctuary, although it's a good idea to put *some* limits on it. In this way, the sanctuary is a transitional point between the limitations of our physical existence and the unlimited.

The sanctuary can be any size, shape, or dimension you choose--large and elaborate or small and cozy. It can be located anywhere--floating in space, on a mountain top, by an ocean, in a valley, anywhere. (You are welcome

to combine all these, if you like.) The nice thing about the sanctuary: you can change it or move it anytime--instantly.

The sanctuary can contain anything. I'll suggest some things here, but consider this just the beginning of your shopping list. Before giving my design tips (you can consider me your *interior* designer), I'll talk about ways in which you might want to "build" your sanctuary.

Some people will build theirs by simply reading the suggestions: as they read each, it's there. Others might read them over now for information, and then put on some soft music, close their eyes, and let the construction begin. Still others may want to make this an *active* process. With their eyes closed (and being careful not to bump into too much furniture), they might physically move as each area of the sanctuary is built. Any--or any combination--of these is, of course, fine.

The doctor can bury his mistakes but an architect can only advise his client to plant vines.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

While reading through my suggestions, you will probably get ideas for additions or alterations. By all means make notes of these, or simply incorporate them as you go. Have I gotten across the idea that this is *your* sanctuary? Okay, let's go.

Entryway. This is a door or some device that responds only to you and lets only you enter. (I'll suggest a way to bring others into your sanctuary in a moment.)

Light. Each time you enter your sanctuary, a pure, white light cascades over you, surrounding, filling, protecting, blessing, and healing you--for your highest good, and the highest good of all concerned.

Main Room. Like the living room of a house or the lobby of a hotel, this is the central area. From here, there are many directions you can go and many things to explore.

People Mover. This is a device to move people in and out of your sanctuary. No one ever enters without your express permission and invitation. You can use an elevator, conveyor belt, *Star Trek* beam-me-up device, or anything else that moves people. Let there be a white light at the entry of the mover as well, so that as people enter and leave your sanctuary, they are automatically surrounded, filled, protected, and healed by that white light, and only that which is for their highest good and the highest good of all concerned takes place.

Information Retrieval System. This is a method of getting any kind of information--providing, of course, it's for your highest good (and the highest good of all concerned) that you have it. The information retrieval system can be a computer screen, a staff of librarians, a telephone, or any other device that will answer your questions.

Video Screen. This is a video (or movie) screen on which you can view various parts of your life--past, present, or future. The screen has a white light around it. When you see images you don't like or don't want to encourage, the light is off. When the screen displays images you want to affirm, the light glows. (Those who are old enough to remember Sylvania's Halo of Light television know just what I mean.)

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be.--Now put the foundations under them.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Ability Suits. This is a closet of costumes that, when worn, give you the instant ability to be anything you want--great actor, successful writer, perfect lover, eager learner, Master of your Universe; any and all are available to you. When you're done with an ability suit, just throw it on the floor in front of the closet--ability suits have the ability to hang themselves up.

Ability Suit Practice Area. This is a place you can try new skills--or improve on old ones--while wearing your ability suits. Leave lots of room, because there's an ability suit for flying and another for space travel. In your sanctuary, not even the sky's a limit.

Health Center. Here the healing arts of all the ages--past, present, future; traditional and alternative--are gathered in one place. All are devoted to your greater health. The health center is staffed with the most competent health practitioners visualization can buy. Who is the most healing being you can imagine? That's who runs your center.

Playroom. Here, all the toys you ever wanted --as a child or as an adult--are gathered. There's lots of room--and time--to play with each. As with ability suits, you never have to worry about "putting your toys away." They put themselves away.

Sacred Room. This is a special sanctuary within your sanctuary. You can go there for meditation, contemplation, or special inner work.

Master Teacher. This is your ideal teacher, the being with whom you are the perfect student. The Master Teacher knows everything about you (has always been with you, in fact). The Master Teacher also knows all you need to learn, the perfect timing for your learning it, and the ideal way of teaching it to you. You don't *create* a Master Teacher--that's already been done. You *discover* your Master Teacher. To meet your Master Teacher, simply walk over to your people mover, ask for your Master Teacher to come forth, and from the pure, white light of your people mover comes your Master Teacher.

(I'll leave you two alone for a while. More uses for the sanctuary later. See you both in Part Three!)

Imagination is more important than knowledge.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Everyone is necessarily the hero of his own life story.

JOHN BARTH

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART THREE

MASTER TEACHERS IN DISGUISE

A problem is a chance
for you to do your best.

DUKE ELLINGTON

Your Master Teacher--as wonderful as your Master Teacher is--is not the only Master Teacher in your life. Far from it.

Most people think Master Teachers are only "in the skies." Not so. They're here, there, and everywhere. Why don't we recognize them as such? Because they are also masters of disguise.

How do they disguise themselves? Only as some of the most potentially powerful learning tools in our lives: mistakes, guilt and resentment, fear, pain and disease, stubbornness, addictions, depression, death, emergencies--all the things most people would, if they could, eliminate.

Some try awfully hard to eliminate them, too. Ever notice the themes of many bestselling self-help books? How to get rid of this Master Teacher, how to dispose of that Master Teacher, 101 ways to eradicate some other Master Teacher.

Why would we not take advantage of potential sources of wisdom in our lives? Maybe we forgot that they are teachers--or maybe nobody ever explained it to us.

Shall I crack any
of those old jokes, master,
At which the audience
never fail to laugh?

ARISTOPHANES
405 B.C.

Let's pretend your Master Teachers sent me here to explain what they have to offer you and what great friends they are. That way maybe you'll use them and stop giving them such a bad name. Consider me the goodwill ambassador for Master Teachers in Disguise Guild.

There is a funny scene from the musical *Showboat*. Two mountain men, who have never seen a play, stumble into the showboat theater, unaware that the actors are acting in a play. They converse with the heroine and encourage the hero. When the villain arrives, they chase him off the stage with six-guns. The mountaineers are proud of themselves for having done "the right thing."

The irony in this, of course, is that the audience, watching *Showboat*, forgets the men playing the mountaineers are actors, too. The audience laughs at the naivet of people mistaking play-acting for real-life. In order to appreciate the humor, however, the audience watching *Showboat* must be lost in the illusion themselves.

That's how the Master Teachers get away with the disguise: we forget they are sources of wisdom--and seldom are we interested in remembering again. If someone stood up during a performance of *Showboat* and began yelling, "Those aren't mountain men! Those are actors! Those aren't real guns! Those are props!" the person would be ushered from the theater.

The Master Teachers need the same illusion to teach as well as they do. The more we believe the characters in a movie (and forget they're really actors), the more moving the movie can be. Thus, the more we believe the Master's disguise, the more powerful and complete the lesson.

So why am I spilling the beans?

If you're struggling too much with the teacher, you might not stand back and learn the lesson. The techniques in this section of the book allow you to take that step back. You can learn from past Master Teaching sessions--all that you might have considered the doom and gloom of your past. You can also use the techniques to learn more quickly the ongoing lessons being taught by your Master Teachers.

Good behavior
is the last refuge
of mediocrity.

HENRY S. HASKINS

But by exposing the Master Teachers (the "villains" of the piece) as the wonderful, kindly, loving friends they are, am I not risking the effectiveness of future lessons?

Not likely.

You'll forget all this.

You're obviously suffering
from delusions of adequacy.

ALEXIS CARRINGTON
DYNASTY

Mistakes

Experience is the name
everyone gives
to their mistakes.

OSCAR WILDE

One of the least disguised of the Master Teachers in Disguise is mistakes. Mistakes, obviously, show us what needs improving. Without mistakes, how would we know what we had to work on?

This process seems an invaluable aid to learning, and yet many people avoid situations in which they might make mistakes. Many people also deny or defend the mistakes they've made--or may be making.

There is a story told of Edison, who made, say, 1,000 unsuccessful attempts before arriving at the lightbulb. "How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?" a reporter asked. "I didn't fail 1,000 times," Edison replied. "The lightbulb was an invention with 1,001 steps."

Why don't most of us see our own lives in this way? I think it goes back to unworthiness. We assume a faade of perfection in a futile attempt to *prove* our worthiness. "An unworthy person couldn't be this perfect," the faade maintains. Alas, being human, we make mistakes. Mistakes crack the faade. As the faade crumbles, a frantic attempt is made to hide the hideous

thing (unworthiness) the faade was designed to hide--from ourselves as much as from others.

If we didn't play this game of denial with ourselves, we would make mistakes, admit them freely, and ask not, "Who's to blame?" or "How can I hide this?" but "What's the lesson here? How can I do this better?"

The goal becomes excellence, not perfection.

Aim for success,
not perfection.
Never give up your right to be wrong,
because then you will lose
the ability to learn new things
and move forward with your life.
Remember that fear
always lurks behind perfectionism.
Confronting your fears and allowing yourself
the right to be human can,
paradoxically,
make you a far happier and
more productive person.

DR. DAVID M. BURNS

It helps to realize that we're *far* from perfect--we are, in fact, *crazy*. I first realized I was crazy when I was fifteen. I was in the shower brushing my teeth. As was my custom, I spit the toothpaste-gook on the shower floor. By some strange suspension of the law of physics, however, the gook landed on my *foot.*

"Eeeuuuuuu!" I recoiled. The thought of *toothpaste-gook* on my *foot* was *too disgusting* to even *consider.*

And then, from wherever those occasional sane thoughts come, came the thought, "Less than one second before the gook landed on your foot, *it was in your mouth.*"

At that moment, I knew I was crazy.

Life has never been the same.

One of the best examples of how strong the taboo against making a mistake has become is the use of the word *sin*. In ancient Roman times, *sin* was a term used in archery. It meant simply *to miss the mark*. At target practice,

each shot was either a hit or a sin. If you sinned, you made corrections and tried again.

Today, of course, *sin* means, to quote the *American Heritage,* "A condition of estrangement from God as a result of breaking God's law." Whew. No wonder people try to avoid even "the near occasion" of sin. Some people treat mistakes with the same reverence.

Mistakes are valuable if, for no other reason, they show us what *not* to do. As Joseph Ray told us, "The Athenians, alarmed at the internal decay of their Republic, asked Demosthenes what to do. His reply: `Do not do what you are doing now.' "

In Hollywood, mis-takes are common. ("That was wonderful, darlings. Now let's get ready for take two.") Give yourself as many re-takes as you need. Stars do it. ("I didn't feel quite right with that one, Mr. deMille. Can we take it again?") Why not you?

A Hollywood song (lyrics by Dorothy Fields) sums it up: "Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, start all over again." Or, to quote an African proverb, "Do not look where you fell, but where you slipped."

Mistakes are
the portals of discovery.

JAMES JOYCE

If you're learning, growing, and trying new things--expect mistakes. They're a natural part of the learning process. In fact, someone once said, "If you're not making at least fifty mistakes a day, you're not trying hard enough." What the person meant, I think, is that growth, discovery, and expansion have mistakes built into them.

To avoid situations in which you *might* make mistakes may be the biggest mistake of all.

The best things and best people
rise out of their separateness.
I'm against a homogenized society
because I want the cream to rise.

ROBERT FROST

The Two Faces of Anger: Guilt and Resentment

I hate quotations.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Guilt is anger directed at ourselves--at what we did or did not do. Resentment is anger directed at others--at what they did or did not do.

The process of guilt and resentment is the same:

1. We have an image that either we or others should live up to. (An image of all the should's, must's, have-to's, and demands we learned or created about our own and/or others' behavior.)
2. We emotionally demand that we or others live up to this image.
3. We or they fail to live up to our image.
4. We judge the "contrary action" as wrong, bad, evil, wicked, etc.
5. We become emotionally upset--bitter, alienated, hurt, hostile, belligerent, combative, contentious, quarrelsome, vicious, touchy, cranky, cross, grouchy, testy, enraged, aggravated, annoyed, furious, teed-off, etc., etc. We'll put them all under the general umbrella of "angry."
6. We assign blame for the emotional upset--either *we* did it or *they* did it. (The judge pronounces sentence.)
7. The swift execution of justice. If we are to blame, we direct the anger toward ourselves, feeling regret, remorse, shame, repentance, culpability, fault--we'll call all that guilt. If the transgressor of our expectations was someone or something other than ourselves, we call our anger spite, jealousy, suspicion, malice, begrudging, covetousness, envy, indignation--all of which we'll call resentment. The sad fact is that, whether we blame *us* or *them, we feel the hurt*. But that is not considered, at least for long.
8. All of this continues for the prescribed length of time and intensity. No reprieves, no appeals--*possible* time off for *very* good behavior.

Every great mistake has
a halfway moment,
a split second when it
can be recalled and
perhaps remedied.

PEARL S. BUCK

If these are the two faces of anger, what's the good in that? Frankly, not much. So why do I have anger in a section on Master Teachers? If we had listened to the voices of the Master Teachers *at the very beginning,*

the *feelings* of guilt and resentment would not have been necessary. To save us from these is the job of the Master Teacher, anger.

Anger begins as an inner twinge. We sense something long before it blossoms (explodes?) into an emotional tirade. If we listen to this twinge--and follow its advice--the emotional outburst (or inburst) is not needed.

What advice is this Master Teacher giving? Stop, look, and change.

Stop. Don't do anything. You are at a choice point. You have two ways to go. One choice equals freedom. The other choice equals misery--familiar misery, but misery nonetheless.

Look. What image (expectation, belief, should, must, ought-to) about either yourself or another is about to be (or has recently been) violated? ("People *should* drive carefully." "I *mustn't* eat cake if I'm on a diet.")

Change. What do you change? *The image.* Your image *is not accurate*--according to hard, cold, physical evidence. People *should* drive carefully, but do they always? Hardly. That "should" is inaccurate, false, erroneous, wrong. People on diets *mustn't* eat cake, but do they? You bet. That "mustn't" is untrue, faulty, mistaken, and incorrect. Based on the actual life-data given to you, your images (should's, must's, have-to's) are all wet (or don't hold any water, or sink in the ocean of truth, or any other aquatic metaphor you choose).

Everything that irritates us
about others can lead us to
an understanding
of ourselves.

CARL JUNG

But what do we often do with the image that is proven--conclusively--to be inaccurate? Do we disregard it? Do we intelligently alter it, based on reality? ("People should drive carefully, and sometimes they don't." "People on diets shouldn't eat too much cake too often.") No. We make ourselves miserable with the inaccurate image. The world's actions do not conform to our beliefs. Woe is us. Our own actions don't conform to our beliefs. Woe *on* us.

Can you see the absurdity of this? We demand that our illusion (our image) be more real than reality (what actually happened), hurting ourselves in the process. Where is the victory in that? (I bet you thought that was a rhetorical question. It's not. There are answers.)

First, we get to feel *right.* Feeling right is a strong drug. Some people sacrifice a lot to be right. Ever hear the expression "dead right"? The question the Master Teacher asks with each initial twinge of guilt or resentment: Would you rather be right or be happy? If we answer "Happy," we are free. If we answer "Right," the cycle of misery begins again. If we're right we must punish--either ourselves or another. As I mentioned, the irony is that when we punish another, we first punish ourselves. Who do you think feels all that hate we have for another? The other person? Seldom. Us? Always.

Second, anger is a habit. We learned it early on--before we could walk or talk, in some instances. The habit is so ingrained in some people that they haven't understood a word of this chapter. "What *is* he talking about? When people do something *wrong,* I will *naturally* feel upset. When I do something *bad,* I will *of course* feel guilty." It's not "natural," it's not "of course"; it's learned. If our early lessons of acceptance were as successful as our early lessons of anger, how much happier we would all be.

The last temptation is
the greatest treason:
To do the right deed
for the wrong reason.

T. S. ELIOT

Third, guilt and resentment give us (and others) permission to do it again. Far from preventing a recurrence, the punishment simply lets the person (either you or another) say, "I've paid my dues; now I'm free to do it again." Many people weigh the guilt they will feel against the pleasure of the forbidden action they want to take. As long as they're willing to "pay the price," the action's okay. People often ponder the anticipated wrath of another before taking certain actions. "If I'm five minutes late, he'll be a little mad." They make a choice between another's resentment and whatever it is that might make them five minutes late. If they're willing to endure the chastisement, they reason, it's okay to be late. Guilt and resentment, then, far from preventing "evil,"* perpetuate it.
**"EVIL" is "LIVE" spelled backwards.*

What if we use the twinge of guilt to change the *action?* What if we feel the guilt and *don't* eat the cake? Isn't this using the Master Teacher's message for our good?

Well, it's a good start. If we don't do something because we're afraid of the guilt, we are, in fact, being motivated by fear and guilt. If we

do good because we fear what might happen to us if we don't do good, the act of good is tainted with fear. As a transition--especially when breaking a habit--it's a beginning, but we must move beyond that or we find ourselves in the trap of not feeling guilty because we'd feel guilty if we felt guilty.

So what can we use to motivate ourselves to do good? Do good because good is the right thing to do. Not right as "conforming to law and morality (or else)," but right as "in accordance with fact, reason, and truth."

Another great motivator is love. Love yourself enough to stay on the diet because you love your body and want to keep it healthy.

More on this and other positive motivators later, along with the cure for guilt and resentment.

The cure for guilt and resentment? Forgiveness. The preventative? Acceptance. The best reason to do good? Loving.

And if you forget any of this, the Master Teacher will be there, just before you veer off-course, asking gently, with that first twinge of guilt or resentment, "Would you rather be right or be happy?"

Your answer will always be respected.

It is easier
to get forgiveness
than permission.

STUART'S LAW OF RETROACTION

The most important thing
is to be whatever you are
without shame.

ROD STEIGER

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LIFE 101

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PART THREE

MASTER TEACHERS IN DISGUISE

Fear

Don't be afraid to take
a big step
if one is indicated.
You can't cross a chasm in
two small jumps.

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

When entering a new situation, wouldn't it be wonderful to have an extra burst of energy? Wouldn't it be nice if our senses sharpened, our mind became more alert, and we felt a sense of increased readiness? Wouldn't it be great if we breathed a little deeper, getting more oxygen; our heart beat a little faster, getting that oxygen around our body; and our eyes widened a little, allowing us to see more clearly?

Wouldn't that be a nice gift to have? That would be a Master Teacher worth welcoming, right?

Well, we have that gift already. It's called fear.

Fear? Sure. If you think about it (or perhaps I should say *feel* about it), the only difference between "fear" and "excitement" is what we label it. The two are pretty much the same physiological/emotional reaction. With fear, we put a negative spin on it: "Oh, no!" With excitement, we give it some positive english: "Oh, boy!"

Why does fear have such a bad rep? Childhood. Our parents used fear to keep us safe when we were out of their sight. As children, we didn't know the difference between playing in the street and playing on a playground; we didn't know the difference between poison and milk; we didn't know the difference between a total stranger and a perfect stranger. Our parents taught us--with the most loving intentions--to fear *everything* new. This fear probably saved our lives on any number of occasions.

Everyone has talent.
What is rare is the courage
to follow the talent to the
dark place where it leads.

ERICA JONG

All well and good. The problem is, at the age of, say, eighteen, when we *did* know the difference between the truly dangerous and the merely intriguing, no one taught us to use fear for the remarkable gift it is. It's as though nobody took the training wheels off our bike.

Today, we probably don't need to fear poison to keep us from drinking it. We don't drink it because, well, there's no future in it. Only occasionally do we need the rush of fear necessary to quickly avoid a new situation (an imperfect stranger on a dark street, for example). Most of the time, however, fear is a wonderful ally in our quest for growth, learning, and expansion.

To use fear as the friend it is, we must retrain and reprogram ourselves. (Enough blaming the past. Your life is in *your* hands now.) We must persistently and convincingly tell ourselves that the fear is here--with its gift of energy and heightened awareness--so we can do our best and learn the most in the new situation.

Before we can make friends with fear, it may be necessary to learn that fear is not the enemy. It's important to know that, if we do the thing we fear, we will not die. Some people tell themselves, of every new situation, "It's going to be awful and terrible and then I'll die." The phrase "to die of embarrassment" is an example of the exaggerations people make about fear.

To prove to ourselves we won't die--that, in fact, nothing physically bad is likely to happen to us--it's necessary to move *through* the fear. Most people treat fear as a wall at the edge of their comfort zone. As they approach the wall, the fear increases, and they turn around and walk away.

They do not do whatever they fear. Hence, the belief that fear is a limitation, and not a prelude to illumination, is perpetuated.

If you want to learn about fear, whatever it is you fear doing, that is the very next thing to do. Fear is not a wall; it's just an emotion. Move *through* the fear. Keep taking step after step toward the thing you want. It may become quite uncomfortable; then, suddenly, it will be less.

When you feel in your gut
what you are and then
dynamically pursue it--
don't back down and don't give up--
then you're going
to mystify a lot of folks.

BOB DYLAN

Once you start doing the thing you fear, the fear is used for its true purpose: extra energy. We use the energy doing what we want to do, and the "wall" of fear disappears.

Over time, you'll learn to use the energy even before you start moving--you'll create a gate for yourself in the wall. Then, when the fear arises, you'll say, "Welcome. I needed a little extra energy. This one might be a challenge!" And off into the sunrise you'll go with your old friend.

To accomplish our destiny
it is not enough to merely
guard prudently
against road accidents.
We must also cover before nightfall
the distance assigned
to each of us.

ALEXIS CARREL

Pain and Dis-ease

If I had a formula

for bypassing trouble,
I would not pass it round.
Trouble creates
a capacity to handle it.
I don't embrace trouble;
that's as bad as treating it
as an enemy.
But I do say meet it as a friend,
for you'll see a lot of it
and had better be
on speaking terms with it.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

Imagine this scenario: You have a very important appointment at 9:00 a.m. The night before, you tell your two roommates, who are also two of your best friends, "I have an important meeting tomorrow morning. It means a lot to me. Would you please make sure I'm awake by 8:00 a.m.?" Your friends, knowing your history of sleeping late, are reluctant. "Please do it," you implore, "It's very important. Do whatever you have to, just make sure I'm up by 8:00 a.m." Your friends agree.

The next morning at 7:00, they knock on your door. You do not respond. Five minutes later they knock harder. No response. Five minutes later they knock and yell. No response. Ten minutes later they come into your room and yell. No response. Five minutes later they gently shake you. You tell them to leave you alone. You've changed your mind. The appointment's not so important after all. Knowing you well, they do not believe you. They shake you and call your name. You tell them you are awake. They are not convinced. They check back in ten minutes: still asleep. As 8:00 a.m. approaches, they shake you, yelling, "Wake up!" You are not pleased. Your friends are threatening cold water. Eventually, reluctantly--if your friends are good enough (i.e., persistent enough)--you wake up.

What if this were the role pain and dis-ease played in your life? We may not remember giving a wake-up call, and we may not remember asking them to do the awakening, but doing it they are.

Whenever he thought about it, he felt terrible. And so, at last, he came to a fateful decision. He decided not to think about it.

What are we waking up to? Ourselves. Living in the moment. Living more effectively. Better relationships with ourselves and others. And so on. When we're "asleep," we are unconscious and not aware of these

possibilities. Our friends know we want to be aware of them, and so our friends go through the thankless job of waking us up.

Pain (any pain--emotional, physical, mental) has a message. The information it has about our life can be remarkably specific, but it usually falls into one of two categories: "We would be more alive if we did more of this," and, "Life would be more lovely if we did less of that." Once we get the pain's message, and follow its advice, the pain goes away.

You can use your sanctuary to find out what your pain is trying to tell you. You can, for example, contact the pain through the information retrieval system. Or you could have it appear on the video screen. You might have to "consult" with it in the health center. You can invite it in on the people mover.

Imagine the pain as though it were animated by Walt Disney, or as a Muppet. Give it a mouth. Let it speak. Remember, this is a friend. Ask it a few questions. For example:

What do I get from having you around? What excuses do you give me? What information do you have for me? What should I be doing less often? What should I be doing more often? How can I take better care of my body? How can I take better care of my emotions? What can I do to take better care of my mind? What can I do to take better care of myself?

After you've had your chat, thank the pain for the information, surround it with white light, and see it dissolve into that light. Then fill the place in your body/mind/emotions where the pain was with white light.

We contain an internal world which is just as active and complicated as the one we live in.

JONATHAN MILLER, M.D.

It is important to follow the pain's advice. Remember, painful = PAY-IN-FULL. The more severe the pain or illness, the more severe will be the necessary changes. These may involve breaking bad habits, or acquiring some new and better ones. To hear the advice of the pain without following it is as useful (or should I say useless?) as any other unheeded good advice. Take the corrective action necessary, and the pain will decrease. Continue this healing-through-action, and you will be healed.

How far will pain go to get its message across? Illness. Dis-ease. The ultimate wake-up call is a life-threatening illness. If that alarm clock in your ear doesn't wake you up, nothing will. My book on this subject, *You Can't Afford the Luxury of a Negative Thought: A Book for People with*

Any Life-Threatening Illness--Including Life, is available by calling 1-800-LIFE-101.

The body never lies.

MARTHA GRAHAM

Stubbornness

It's a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it.

SOMERSET MAUGHAM

Gather 'round rebels, this chapter's especially for you. (Considering my temperament, I should probably say "me.")

Many of us rebels got into the rebellion business for good reason--we were rebels with a cause. As children, when the world moved in with its obsession for conformity ("We'd love you a lot more if only you were a little less different"), the rebels said, "I won't," and stuck to it.

The defense of our individuality continued--probably necessarily so--through formal schooling (Ugh!). Eventually, it became a habit. We became masters of "won't power." Give us something to be *against* and we shine. As soon as what we're against has gone, we're lost.

Rebels without something to be against are a sad sight. They wander around. They mutter to themselves. They secretly hope something will go wrong so they can be against it. Like professional soldiers in peacetime, rebels would probably be very unhappy in Utopia.

Anyone can revolt. It is more difficult silently to obey our own inner promptings, and to spend our lives finding sincere and fitting means of expression for our temperament and our gifts.

GEORGES ROUAULT

Fortunately, there *is* a solution. Just as fear is also excitement, stubbornness is also *determination*. It's simply a matter of shifting from "won't power" to "will power."

Rather than "I won't get sick," change it to "I *will* keep my mind, body, and emotions healthy." Replace "I won't be with people who don't understand me," with "I *will* be with people who like me as I am." Turn "I hate war," to "I love peace."

It's a matter of finding the positive opposite (and rebels are *so* good at finding opposites) and focusing on that. This shifts the energy from stubbornness to determination.

My only problem: how do I communicate all this to my fellow rebels in a way they won't rebel against?

Let us, then, be up and doing, With a heart for any fate; Still achieving, still pursuing, Learn to labor and to wait.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
1839

Subtracting Addiction

When you stop drinking, you have to deal with this marvelous personality that started you drinking in the first place.

JIMMY BRESLIN

We've all got one--an addiction, that is. There are the well-known addictions: drugs, alcohol, smoking, gambling. There are the less-known-but-getting-more-well-known-each-day addictions: food, sex, romance, work, religion, spirituality--almost anything good can be turned bad by obsession and lack of moderation. Some people are addicted to their negative thoughts and the feelings those thoughts produce.

Some minimize their addictions by calling them "bad habits." Others deny addiction and seemingly become addicted to denial. Many, who wouldn't dream of having an addiction, are addicted to normalcy. We all have one.

An addiction is anything that has more power over you than you do. If it "runs" you, it's an addiction. If you're not sure it's addiction, stop doing it. If you can stop for an indefinite period of time, then it's a

preference, not an addiction. If you can't--or can't even conceive of giving it (them) up--that's addiction.

The "old" word for addiction was *temptation.* "Lead us not into temptation" (Jesus); "My temptation is quiet" (Yeats); "I can resist everything except temptation" (Oscar Wilde).

One of the most successful programs for overcoming addiction is the Twelve Steps. Originally created to help alcoholics, the Twelve Steps have been adapted to every known addiction. The program has benefited millions.

Why comes temptation, but for man to meet And master and make crouch beneath his foot, And so be pedestaled in triumph?

ROBERT BROWNING

THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addiction--that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of this Higher Power, *as we understood Him, Her, or It.*
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to our Higher Power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have our Higher Power remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought, through prayer and meditation, to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power *as we understood Him, Her, or It,* praying only for knowledge of our Higher Power's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this messageto others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of

life.

JAMES 1:12

Once you overcome your addiction, you know you can overcome all things. The impossible becomes possible. The undoable, doable. The unmanageable, manageable. Overcoming an addiction even eases the process of releasing our addiction to life at the time of our death.

In the process of overcoming addiction, you can learn discipline, self-confidence, humility, appreciation, self-love, and forgiveness. Important lessons, these. That's why I consider addiction one of the Master Teachers in disguise.

A good many young writers make the mistake of enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope, big enough for the manuscript to come back in. This is too much of a temptation to the editor.

RING LARDNER

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART THREE

MASTER TEACHERS IN DISGUISE

Depression

Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned; and however early a man's training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly.

THOMAS HUXLEY

The word *depression* is used to describe two distinct maladies. One use is to express *disappointment:* "They didn't return my phone calls. I'm depressed." "How depressing--the coffee machine is out of *cafe ol.*" We also feel this mild kind of depression in the normal cycle of life's ups and downs.

The other use of the word *depression* is medical--it describes a physical illness caused by a biological (yes, usually genetic) imbalance in the body.

The simple solution for disappointment depression: Get up and get moving. *Physically* move. Do. Act. Get going.

Depression is often caused by a sense of not having accomplished enough. We question the usefulness of what we've achieved in the past, and doubt our ability to achieve anything useful in the future. Self-doubt robs us of our energy. We feel depressed.

We look at all we want to do. It seems overwhelming. We tell ourselves, "I can't do all this," and instantly fulfill our own prophecy by not even trying. The energy drops even more, and the depression deepens.

I was once thrown out of a mental hospital for depressing the other patients.

OSCAR LEVANT

When we eventually feel we *must* do something, there seems to be so much left undone from our previous inertia that we become confused. The confusion leads to indecision. The indecision leads to, "Oh, what's the use," and more inaction, which leads to you guessed it.

At some point, the cycle must be broken by action. Do something -- *anything* --physical. If the house is a mess, pick up one thing -- *any* one thing -- and *do* something with it: put it away, throw

it out, send it to your brother, donate it to charity, something, *anything.* Pick up one more thing. Continue. Eventually, you will have a clean house. Before "eventually," however, the depression will begin to lift.

Yes, disappointment depression is a Master Teacher. Its message is, "Get moving. The energy is here. Use it." When you start to move, the energy will meet your movement. But first, you must move.

Medical ("clinical") depression is not caused by disappointment or lack of action, but by a biological imbalance in the chemistry of the brain. This form of depression takes a bit more explaining--there are *so many* misconceptions about it. Here's my story.

Over an almost-thirty-year period, I had attended more personal growth workshops, visited more healers, meditated more hours, taken more vitamins, and not only read but written more self-help books than almost anyone I knew. Nevertheless, I was not happy. I wasn't even satisfied. I wasn't even simply bored.

I was miserable.

By mid-1993, I was ready to try anything--even psychiatry. I called Harold H. Bloomfield, M.D., one of my co-authors on *How*

to Survive the Loss of a Love, told him I wanted to make a professional appointment, and met him at his office. We spoke for an hour. Finally, he said, "Peter, you've been suffering!"

Yeah. That's what I was doing--although I had never applied the word *suffering* to myself. His official diagnosis: depression.

Like many people, I had some serious misconceptions about depression. I didn't *like* depression. I didn't *want* depression. But then, I guess you don't get to pick your disease.

The tricks that work on others count for nothing in that very well-lit back alley where one keeps assignations with oneself: No winning smiles will do here, no prettily drawn lists of good intentions.

JOAN DIDION

To my surprise, I learned that depression was a physical illness, a biochemical imbalance in the brain most likely caused by certain neurotransmitters (the fluid the brain uses to communicate with itself) being pumped away too soon. When there are too few of certain neurotransmitters, brain function becomes inharmonious, and the complex mental, emotional, and physical manifestations of depression result.

These manifestations can include a "down" feeling, fatigue, sleep disorders, physical aches and pains, eating irregularities,

listening to Julio Iglesias, irritability, difficulty concentrating, feeling worthless, guilt, addictions (attempts to self-medicate the pain away), suicidal thoughts, and my favorite, anhedonia.

Anhedonia means "the inability to experience pleasure." The original title for Woody Allen's movie *Annie Hall* was *Anne Hedonia*--the perfect description of Woody Allen's character. It was also the description of my life. Although I had spikes of happiness, nothing gave me pleasure for any length of time. The concept of "just being" was entirely foreign to me. My intensive self-help seeking since 1965 had been my attempt to obtain the simple enjoyment of living that many people seemed to have naturally.

All my attempts had been unsuccessful--I had a *physical illness* that prevented even the best-built self-esteem structure from standing very long. In the book Harold and I later wrote, *How to Heal Depression*, the chapter explaining this phenomenon is entitled, "The Power of Positive Thinking Crashes and Burns in the Face of Depression." You can plant all the personal growth seeds you want, but they become like the seeds that fell on the rock in Jesus' parable (Matthew 13:5-6):

Some [seed] fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

That's what depression had wrought inside me: one, vast, barren rock garden--without the garden.

There is surely a piece of divinity in us, something that was before the elements, and owes no homage unto the sun.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE

1642

I also learned that most depression is inherited. I realized that if I looked around my family tree and saw a lot of nuts, there was a very good chance I was not a passion fruit (which is *just* what I thought I was). Since depression is a genetic biological illness, like diabetes or low thyroid, it wasn't lack of character, laziness, or something I could "snap out of"--it would be like trying to snap out of a toothache.

I was ready to consider what the good Doctor Bloomfield recommended I do about my depression.

He explained several options, which included two short-term "talk" therapies (Cognitive Therapy and Interpersonal Therapy) and antidepressants--as in Prozac. I, who had been programmed by John-Roger to think drugs were the devil's own tool, thought--as many people did--that Prozac was the devil itself.

The Church of Scientology had done a brilliant job programming the media and, hence, the general public, into believing that not only was Prozac unsafe, but *astonishingly* unsafe. They accomplished this (for whatever reason) by finding a handful of people who had done some aberrant things. Scientology then presented the aberrant behavior of these people as typical side effects of Prozac. It was a thoroughly imbalanced and unscientific presentation. More than five million people take Prozac in this country every day--ten million worldwide. Millions more have used Prozac since its introduction in 1987. It is among the safest of all prescribed medications. (No one has ever died from taking Prozac--although hundreds die each year from allergic reactions to penicillin, or from internal bleeding caused by aspirin.)

Still, I didn't like the idea of taking a pill that would--as Newsweek pointed out on its cover--give me a different personality.

I didn't necessarily like the personality I had, but I also didn't want to become a Stepford writer.

A depressed person is someone who, if he is in the bath, will not get out to answer the telephone.

QUENTIN CRISP

Harold explained that antidepressant medications do not give one a new personality. There is no "high" connected to them. They're not tranquilizers, pep pills, or mood elevators. All antidepressants do is keep the brain from pumping away certain neurotransmitters too quickly. This allows the neurotransmitters to rise to appropriate levels, which lets the brain function harmoniously again.

An analogy might be that antidepressants plug a hole in a rain barrel so the barrel can fill. The depression lifts because the brain's naturally produced neurotransmitters are allowed to rise to natural levels. Antidepressant medications, then, don't add a synthetic chemical to the brain that alters the brain's function; they merely keep the brain from pumping away its own naturally produced neurotransmitters too quickly.

Further, if you take antidepressants and feel better, it's *because you are depressed.* If you take an antidepressant and are not

depressed, you won't feel much of anything. In this, antidepressants are like aspirin: if you have a headache and take an aspirin, your headache goes away and you feel better. If you don't have a headache and take an aspirin, you won't feel much different. The good feelings touted so enthusiastically by people taking antidepressants are not caused by the antidepressant medication, but by the lifting of the depression--when a pain you've grown accustomed to goes away, the feeling of just plain "ordinary" can seem like euphoria.

Okay. I was ready. Lay on the Prozac.

Within a week of beginning the medication, I felt not exactly better, but as though the bottom of my emotional pit had been raised. In the past, small setbacks had caused a toboggan ride all the way down to an emotional state best described as "What's the point of living?" In the choice between life and death, I would reluctantly choose life (with about the same enthusiasm as Michelangelo's Adam on the Sistine Chapel receiving the spark of life from God), and crawl back up to "normal" again.

Normal for me, however, *was* depression. As it turns out, I've had a long-term, low-grade depression since I was three. This depressed state was my benchmark for "normal." On top of this,

I would have, from time to time, *major* depressive episodes--lasting from six months to more than a year. When the two of these played together (that is, played havoc together on me), I had what is known in psychiatric circles as a *double depression* (a fate I would not wish upon my worst enemy).

If Quentin Crisp had never existed it is unlikely that anyone would have had the nerve to invent him.

ANONYMOUS REVIEWER

After I'd taken Prozac for two weeks, I felt the floor of my dungeon had risen even higher. By the third week, I felt I had--for the first time--some level ground on which to build my life. I still was concerned how firm it was, so I walked across it lightly, as one does across a piece of land that was once quicksand.

That was the image I had: any good deed, any positive project, any accomplishment, I placed on the quicksand where--like Janet Leigh's car in *Psycho*--it would slowly, painfully, inexorably sink.

Now I inched a little farther toward the center of my land, seeing how *firma* the *terra* really was. It was a great victory when I could jump up and down in what was once my pool of emotional quicksand and know it was finally safe to build there.

What I built, of course, was up to me: if I built depressing things, my life would still be depressing. But now I had a chance to build something stable, something reliable, something good.

I also began feeling *spiritual* for the first time. I felt connected to God in a solid, unpretentious way. The discovery of this connection was no great "hooray, hooray, I found God," but a slow clarification--like watching a Polaroid picture develop. It all seemed so natural--and simple. It had nothing to do with John-Roger's intricate cosmology I had so carefully memorized.

And--just as so many other great teachers had said--the kingdom of God was within.

I also found myself simply *enjoying* things: ordinary, everyday, no-big-deal activities were *pleasurable*. I remember sitting in a chair, waiting for a table at a restaurant, and I was enjoying just sitting there. I felt so contented, all alone, sitting there, it was almost like being in love.

In fact, it seemed that I was falling in love--with myself.

To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.

OSCAR WILDE

Are *you* depressed? Well, here's a checklist from the National Institutes of Health. On this checklist they also give symptoms of *mania,* which is the irrational, unpredictable upperswing of manic depression. (I never had mania, but I *did* overachieve as a compensation for the depression--I was trying to "prove" my worthiness by outward achievement. Doesn't work.)

According to the National Institutes of Health:

A thorough diagnosis is needed if four or more of the symptoms of depression or mania persist for more than two weeks or are interfering with work or family life.

With available treatment, eighty percent of the people with serious depression--even those with the most severe forms--can improve significantly. Symptoms can be relieved, usually in a matter of weeks.

Symptoms of Depression Can Include:

- Persistent sad or "empty" mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities, including sex
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Sleep disturbances (insomnia, early-morning waking, or oversleeping)
- Eating disturbances (loss of appetite and weight, or weight gain)
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts
- Irritability
- Excessive crying
- Chronic aches and pains that don't respond to treatment

In the Workplace, Symptoms of Depression Often May Be Recognized by:

- Decreased productivity
- Morale problems
- Lack of cooperation
- Safety problems, accidents
- Absenteeism
- Frequent complaints of being tired all the time
- Complaints of unexplained aches and pains
- Alcohol and drug abuse

Symptoms of Mania Can Include:

- Excessively "high" mood
- Irritability
- Decreased need for sleep
- Increased energy and activity
- Increased talking, moving, and sexual activity
- Racing thoughts
- Disturbed ability to make decisions
- Grandiose notions
- Being easily distracted

These symptoms are not "just life." If you've had four or more of them for more than two weeks, or *any* of them is interfering with your work or relationships (including with yourself), a diagnosis is in order.

Never go to a doctor whose office plants have died.

ERMA BOMBECK

Even if you checked every box (as I must have--I could have been depression's poster boy), you are not *necessarily* depressed. This is simply a checklist to see if a diagnosis from a physician (an M.D., D.O., or psychiatrist) is in order. Your physician may say you're not depressed, but you do (for example) have low thyroid (which mimics depression symptoms in about twenty percent of the cases). This is why a *physician* should be consulted for diagnosis.

On the other hand, emotional support and the administration of short-term "talk" therapies--such as Cognitive or Interpersonal Therapy--is often best given by psychologists (Ph.D.s or MFCCs).

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART THREE

MASTER TEACHERS IN DISGUISE

Death

Death is an enormous taboo. It's difficult to discuss death without people giggling nervously, becoming entirely too somber, or saying something like, "*Death?* You're going to talk about *death?* Such bad taste!"

Death is a friend of ours; and he that is not ready to entertain him is not at home.

FRANCIS BACON

When I tell people that in this chapter we will explore the idea that death is a *friend*--a joyful, freeing process--they're liable to think I'm mad. Well, I've been thought mad before--by experts. I figure in 1,000 years, we'll all be dead. What difference does it make what people say about us today? So why not enjoy ourselves while we're alive?

That's precisely the point of death.

In our culture, death is unmentionable. No one ever *dies.* People pass away, pass over, are gone, asleep, at peace, at rest, expired, or departed *(dearly).*

Many people feel "icky" thinking about death--so they don't. Who, after all, wants to feel icky? They begin to associate icky with death. Then they *know* that death is icky. One should, therefore, not think about death, because there's lots of time to feel icky after you're dead.

Thus, thus, it is joy to pass to the world below.

VIRGIL

70-19 B.C.

One of the situations in which everybody seems to fear loneliness is death.--In tones drenched with pity, people say of someone, "He died alone." I have never understood this point of view. Who wants to have to die and be polite at the same time?

QUENTIN CRISP

This is about as much logic as most people apportion to death. The problem is, if we don't consider death, we are not fully prepared to consider life. Which brings us to our Pop Quiz on death:

Who said this? "We need to be reminded that there is nothing morbid about honestly confronting the fact of life's end, and preparing for it so that we may go gracefully and peacefully. The fact is, we cannot truly face life until we have learned to face the fact that it will be taken away from us."

A. Mohandas K. Gandhi
B. Woody Allen
C. Thomas Mann
D. Mark Twain
E. Billy Graham
F. Charlie Chaplin
G. Vladimir Nabokov
H. Emily Dickinson
I. JOHN KEATS

Answer to Pop Quiz (with commentary):

Gandhi said about death, "We do not know whether it is good to live or to die. Therefore, we should not take delight in living nor should we tremble at the thought of death. We should be equiminded towards both. This is the ideal."

Woody Allen wrote, "Death is one of the few things that can be done as easily lying down. The difference between sex and death is that with death you can do it alone and no one is going to make fun of you."

Thomas Mann pointed out, "The only religious way to think of death is as part and parcel of life; to regard it, with the understanding and the emotions, as the inviolable condition of life."

Mark Twain, near death in 1910, wrote, "Death, the only immortal who treats us all alike, whose pity and whose peace and whose refuge are for all--the soiled and the pure, the rich and the poor, the loved and the unloved."

Charlie Chaplin (you thought I was kidding? Would I kid about death? Sure. But would I kid about Chaplin? Never.) said, "Beauty is an omnipresence of death and loveliness, a smiling sadness that we discern in nature and all things, a mystic communion that the poet feels."

Vladimir Nabokov told us, "Life is a great surprise. I do not see why death should not be an even greater one."

Emily Dickinson, a full twenty-three years before her death, rhymed,

Because I could not stop for Death
He kindly stopped for me--
The Carriage help but just Ourselves
And Immortality

JOHN KEATS mised death and courtship when wooing Fanny Brawne. On July 25, 1819, he wrote her, "I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute." (What woman could resist?)

Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other.

FRANCIS BACON

1625

Death is just nature's way of telling you, "Hey, you're not alive anymore."

BULL *NIGHT COURT*

The answer, then, to our Pop Quiz is (E) Billy Graham.

Why, then, if all these great people had nifty things to say about death, do we as a culture fear it so?

Once again, we return to those thrilling days of childhood. Most people experienced another's death in childhood. Someone (or a pet) they knew as an active, warm, animated being was suddenly an unmoving, cold, silent corpse. This death stuff did not look like much fun.

"Why is he lying in that box? Why are they going to put him in the ground (or burn him)? If he's gone to God, why are you so sad?" In the grief, commotion, and exhaustion that surrounds dying and its aftermath, a child's questions about death are seldom properly answered.

The more people a child asks, the more conflicting the answers may become. Children are little curiosity machines. They know how to ask all the "right" questions--the ones most adults haven't yet figured out for themselves. In the dialogue between children and adults, only sex is shrouded in as much mystery, embarrassment, and confusion as death.

If the person (or pet) who died was close to the child, then he or she will associate death with the intense pain of life's first significant loss. Death, then, is associated with hurt. The child also sees how the adults behave at death: weeping, wailing, suffering. This death thing must be pretty terrible.

If, in childhood, the death of another took place after a long illness, all the disagreeableness of the dying process--hospitals, infirmities, unpleasant sights and smells--is associated with death itself. To a child, seeing someone gradually get sicker and

in more pain seems to mean that, after death, the sickness and pain will worsen.

This description doesn't even include the hell-is-waiting-for-you, burning-sulphur, fire-and-brimstone religious training some children get. A child, hearing a list of sins, soon realizes, "If this is all I have to do to go to hell, *I'm going to hell.*"

Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas, Ease after war, death after life does greatly please.

EDMUND SPENSER

1590

It's little wonder that children put the subject of death on hold. Like homework, if they don't have to think about it, they won't. Many people stopped thinking about death in childhood and haven't sincerely considered it since.

This means that many adults hold a child's view of death. Let's see if we can reeducate that part of ourselves--to mature about death.

Of course, one's belief about what happens *after* death falls into The Gap. There are, however, only three major beliefs about death

in the entire Gap. One of these views fits almost every religious, spiritual, philosophical, agnostic, and atheistic group in The Gap.

Interestingly, none of these beliefs has much bad stuff to say about death to the average adult follower of that belief. If there is any nastiness after death, it's going to happen to *them* (the nonbelievers), not to *us* (the believers). To a child, certain aspects of some beliefs might appear terrifying, but to an adult, there's nothing to fear. (In fact, in many cases, death is rather appealing.)

Although I stay away from Gap matters as a rule, I will make this one suggestion for you to follow while exploring your Gap: Live by what you believe so fully that your life blossoms, or else purge the fear-and-guilt-producing beliefs from your life.

When people believe one thing and do another, they are inviting misery. If you give yourself the name, play the game. When you believe something you don't follow with your heart, intellect, and body, it hurts. Don't do that. Live your belief, or let that belief go.

If you're not actively living a belief, it's not really *your* belief, anyway--you're just kidding yourself. If you're not actively involved in getting what you want, you don't really want it. You probably *really* believe something else, but may be afraid to admit it to yourself.

As a well-spent day brings happy sleep, so life well used brings happy death.

LEONARDO DA VINCI

Immortality consists largely of boredom.

COCHRANE

Star Trek

Let's take a look at each of the three beliefs about death from an adult point of view. If, as a child, you were told you'd know more about death "when you're older," I offer this one thought: you're older now.

Life is purely biological. Once the brain stops working, our sense of aliveness is no more, and that's it. As Dr. Albert Ellis, a proponent of this school of thought, pointed out with his characteristic candor and clarity, "When you're dead, you're f---ing dead!"

The idea of "being no more" may frighten a child. Children associate nothingness with the dark. The dark usually frightens a child. Therefore death is frightening.

Many adults can probably agree with William Hazlitt:

Perhaps the best cure for the fear of death is to reflect that life has a beginning as well as an end. There was a time when we were not: this gives us no concern--why then should it trouble us that a time will come when we shall cease to be? I have no wish to be alive a hundred years ago, why should I regret and lay it so much to heart that I shall not be here a hundred years hence?

If this is a purely biological life, then who would want to live forever anyway? Imagine living forever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever. If you got bored reading all those "ever's," imagine how quickly you would become bored with an eternal life in a finite universe.

Think about it: if you had infinite time but finite space, eventually you would have explored and experienced every "thing" there was to explore and experience. And then you'd get to start over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over.

If you've ever gotten bored with anything you once found fascinating, you understand the problem. Given enough time, you would become bored with everything in life.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.--For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

JOHN 3:16-17

Infinity is enough time.

After enough time, you would find yourself agreeing with the person who, in 1990 B.C., wrote,

Death is in my sight today As when a man desires to see home When he has spent many years in captivity.

It's from a poem called *The Man Who Was Tired of Life*.

Or, as Mark Twain explained, "Whoever has lived long enough to find out what life is, knows how deep a debt of gratitude we owe to Adam, the first great benefactor of our race. He brought death into the world."

I end the exploration of this portion of The Gap with the words of Albert Einstein: "The fear of death is the most unjustified of all fears, for there is no risk of accident to someone who's dead."

When you die, you go to heaven or hell. This life is a one-shot opportunity. If we're good, we get paradise forever. If we're bad,

we go to hell forever. (Catholics include a pre-heaven condition, purgatory, for those who weren't bad enough for hell, but are not yet good enough for heaven.)

This sounds pretty good. Eternal paradise. Now, this wouldn't become tiresome because, as far as I know, heaven is infinite, and, as far as I know, we are not saddled with physical bodies. This wouldn't be boring. This would be eternal bliss.

"Life is eternal," Rossiter Raymond wrote in his *Commendatory Prayer*, "and love is immortal; and death is only a horizon; and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight."

In this belief of death, you rest after a careworn life, but you rest not in nothingness, but in paradise. God, James Johnson imagines, uses death as a sort of chauffeur for the Divine Rest Limo Company. God orders death:

Find Sister Caroline
And she's tired--
She's weary--
Go down, Death, and bring her to me.

Thomas Fuller, in his 1642 *Life of Monica*, tells of the saint's death: "Drawing near her death, she sent most pious thoughts as

harbingers to heaven; and her soul saw a glimpse of happiness through the chinks of her sickness-broken body."

The Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, has many nice things to say about death. Ecclesiastes 7:1 tells us, "The day of death [is] better than the day of birth." In 1 Corinthians 15:5-55, Paul wrote, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Death is a low chemical trick played on everybody except sequoia trees.

J. J. FURNAS

In Revelation 1:18, Jesus said, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." After reading that, it's hard to understand how anyone calling him- or herself a Christian could possibly have any concerns about death. The One Christians believe in says He has the *keys* to hell and death. If someone who loved you said he had the keys to get you out of jail, would you worry about spending any time there?

The Koran begins by calling God merciful, and at 19:66-67 asks, "Man says: `How is it possible, when I am dead, that I shall then

be brought forth alive?' Does he not remember that We have created him once, and that he was nothing then?"

The Koran 29:64 also states, "The present life is naught but a diversion and a sport; surely the Last Abode is Life, did they but know." Did they but know, there would be no fear of death.

Reincarnation. According to reincarnationists, a portion of us keeps coming back again and again, living lifetime after lifetime, in body after body, until all necessary lessons are learned. How do we know when all necessary lessons have been learned? When we stop coming back.

VARIATION: We already know all there is to know, but we agreed to forget it for a specified period of time so we can take part in this great play (either opera, soap opera, horse opera, or Grand Ole Opry) called life.

If reincarnation is your belief, you, too, have nothing to fear. Death is the great liberator, a chance to take off your school clothes (or make-up) and meet with old friends at the malt shop (or corner pub) for drinks and good times.

As the Bhagavad Gita (chapter 2, verse 27), a holy text of Hindus--the largest group of reincarnationists outside Southern California--says,

For certain is death for the born

And certain is birth for the dead;

Therefore over the inevitable

Thou should not grieve.

Or fear.

> *Death is, to us here, the most terrible word we know. But when we have tasted its reality, it will mean to us birth, deliverance, a new creation of ourselves.*
>
> GEORGE MERRIMAN

In fact, nobody really knows for sure. Many who have lived after being pronounced clinically dead report the trip to "Other side, the[Other side]>the other side" as a pleasant journey. Almost all who remember describe roughly the same experience: looking down on their now-dead body, lifting away from earth, going through a white tunnel, being met by a loving Master form, having their life shown to them from the beginning, learning lessons from their life experiences, being given a choice to "go on" or to return

and continue to "study" on earth, and choosing to go back. (Those who chose to go on, well, they are not available for comment.) Many report meeting loved ones who had previously died.

Some people remember all these events, others remember some of them, but the consistency of descriptions from a broad range of individuals--even people from *Ohio*--points to the possibility that death (or at least the transition to death) might not be so bad. (An interesting book on the subject is *Heading Toward Omega* by Kenneth Ring.)

If, as Walt Whitman put it, "Nothing can happen more beautiful than death," why don't we all just kill ourselves?

Good question--especially to ask while reading Whitman. That man seemed to have an *affair* with death. ("The sea lisped to me the low and delicious word death," "Come lovely and soothing death," "Sooner or later delicate death," "Praise! Praise! Praise! For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.") Yumm.

Suicide is always an option, of course. The option is, sometimes, what makes life bearable. Knowing we don't absolutely *have* to be here can make *being* here a little more bearable. I do not, however, recommend suicide.

Exception: When you have a terminal illness and are clearly on the way out--almost gone, in fact--then it's between you and your Gap.

If, as I propose, we are here to learn, then all life--including that which is so painful it makes us want to die--can be used for learning, upliftment, and growth. Sometimes it's only after a painful process is over that we can look back and see what we learned from the situation.

Arthur Dent: *You know,*
it's at times like this,
when I'm stuck in a Volgon air lock
with a man from Betelgeuse,
about to die of asphyxiation in deep space,
that I really wish I'd listened to what
my mother told me when I was young.

Ford Prefect: *Why? What did she tell you?*

Arthur: *I don't know;*

I didn't listen.

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

In fact, we seldom know it when our greatest lessons are taking place; our experience at the time is usually confusion, pain, and/or discomfort. It's like traveling--when seeing the most exotic lands with the most amazing scenery sometimes means

sleeping in tents two hundred miles from the nearest toilet. It's when we get back home, we remember the magnificent vistas. As William Burroughs explained, "There are certain things human beings are not permitted to know--like what we're doing."

Suicide is not a good idea for another reason. Before we can learn life's more advanced lessons, we must learn the basics--how to talk, walk, operate a body, read, make a living, etc. That takes *at least* twenty years. (Some people haven't mastered it in fifty.) That you're reading this book indicates you've "done your time" in the "basic" school, and are now ready for the *truly* challenging stuff. Why waste all that preparation?

Sure, "the other side" is wonderful, but you'll be spending the rest of your death there. As Malcolm Forbes had etched on his tombstone, "While alive, he lived."

While alive, live.

Emergencies

When you don't have any money, the problem is food. When you have money it's sex. When you have both it's health. If everything is simply jake, then you're fiightened of death.

J. P. DONLEAVY

There are no emergencies, only *emergences.*

Lessons don't always emerge in a methodical, orderly, systematic way. The time-frame is seldom leisurely, steady, and unhurried.

In addition to lessons, there are *tests*. Without tests, how can your Master Teachers know what you've learned, and what you need work on next?

We are, of course, tested all the time. Our successful action means we're passing tests. Walking, speaking, tying shoes--all those things that were major challenges at age two are today's often-passed tests for most of us. By merely standing up, for example, we pass gravity's ongoing tests. (Yes, gravity is a Master Teacher. So is levity.)

When we are tested in new areas, we tend to make more mistakes--it's because we haven't mastered the new area yet. That's okay. We're not *supposed* to have mastered it. We're the *student,* not the master. When the tests happen one at a time, we can usually manage them. But when the tests emerge two, three, four, fifteen at a time: emergency!

An emergency is several Master Teachers standing at once and saying, "Pop Quiz!"

When you feel yourself overwhelmed by "problems," take a look at the Master Teachers around you. See the smiling faces of Mistakes, Guilt, Resentment, Fear, Pain, Disease, Stubbornness, Addiction, Depression, Death. They're waiting to see how well you do.

God gave burdens, also shoulders.

YIDDISH PROVERB

Do well. Consider them not a problem, but a challenge. Rise to the occasion.

Emerge-and-see.

Ask yourself, "What have I learned about this situation that I can use?" The answer to that question, and your successful application of it, will lead to the spontaneous emergence of achievement, fulfillment, happiness--and a gathering of justifiably proud Master Teachers.

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART FOUR

TOOLS FOR SUCCESSFUL DOERS

Decide what you want, decide what you are willing to exchange for it. Establish your priorities and go to work.

H. L. HUNT

We can learn by doing--by doing *anything.* Even if we fail--repeatedly--there's something to be learned from the failures. Of course, one of the lessons we can learn from failure is, "I want to learn some new ways of doing things so I don't have to fail so much."

Or, perhaps you already are a successful doer and, like all successful doers, you know there's always more to learn about successfully doing.

This section focuses more on "outer" achievements. The next section, "To Have Joy and to Have It More Abundantly," highlights methods for "inner" success.

You will notice, however, that most tools can be used for either inner or outer learning. The same commitment that allows you to make a million dollars can be used for achieving happiness. The same discipline that allows you to focus on your self-worth can also be used to master scuba diving.

The inner mirrors the outer. The outer mirrors the inner.

What Is Your Purpose?

My function in life was to render clear what was already blindingly conspicuous.

QUENTIN CRISP

Before taking successful action, you must first know what you want. (If you don't know what you want, how will you know when you've gotten it?) Before knowing what you want, it's good to know *why* you want it. A good way of knowing why you want it is knowing your *purpose* in life.

What is your purpose?

A purpose is something you discover. It's already there. It's always been there. You've lived your life by it--perhaps without fully realizing it. (Although when you do realize it, you'll know you've known it all along.)

It's your bellwether, your personal inner divining rod. It tells you, in any given moment, whether you're living your life "on purpose" or not.

A purpose is a simple, positive statement of why you are here. It usually begins, "I am " and is only a few words long.

It is not a goal. A goal is something that can be reached. A purpose is a direction, like east. No matter how far east you travel, there's still lots more east to go. Purposes can be used for selecting goals, just as someone traveling east can select certain cities as guideposts along the eastward journey.

A purpose is never achieved; it is fulfilled in each moment you are "on purpose." You use your purpose to set your course in life. It's your inner compass. When you are "on course," you are "on purpose."

The purpose of life is a life of purpose.

ROBERT BYRNE

A purpose is not an affirmation. Affirmations are created and used to make that creation real. A purpose is not created--it is *discovered* . You already *have* a purpose. You have *always* had a purpose. It has always been the *same* purpose. Your purpose will--for the remainder of this lifetime--remain the same.

A purpose is like a heart. You don't create a heart, but, like the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz,* you can discover the one you've always had.

Purposes sound something like this (Don't use this list to *select* a purpose for yourself. Give yourself the time and the freedom to discover your own. These are just to give you an *idea* of what purposes sound like.): "I am a cheerful giver," "I am a happy student," "I am a devoted friend," "I serve the planet," "I am a joyful explorer," "I am a lover of life," "I

want a hamburger" (all right--the last one was my *personal* goal for the moment).

There are many ways to discover your purpose. Here are a few. If one doesn't work, try another. Patience, seeker, patience! The discovery of a purpose can take a while. When you know yours, you'll know it was worth the wait.

1. Make a list of all your positive qualities. This is no time for modesty. (False humility, by the way, is just a form of egoism.) Narrow each of your good qualities to one or two words. "Loving, giving, joyful, playful, caring, effective, etc." If your list is short, ask friends for suggestions. Using these words as a starting point, find the two or three that suit you best. Arrange them in sentences starting with "I " or "I am " When you discover your purpose, it will "click."
2. Before going to sleep, give yourself the instruction: "When I wake up, I will know my purpose." Have pen and paper by your bed and, first thing when you wake up, write whatever words are there. It *may* be your purpose.
3. Go to your sanctuary and ask your Master Teacher. (Remember your Master Teacher?)

Once you discover your purpose, I suggest that you not tell anyone. This keeps it powerful. It also keeps others from saying, "So you're a joyful giver, huh? Okay, I'll take five dollars," or "Happy helper? You don't seem very happy to *me.*" Life's hard enough without having our purpose on display for the potshots of the world.

It is better to be hated for what you are than loved for what you are not.

ANDRE GIDE

When you know your purpose, it's easier to set and achieve goals. The litmus test of any action is simply, "Does this fulfill my purpose?" If yes, you can choose whether you want to do it or not. There is--as you may already know--a certain value to being "on purpose."

In order to be irreplaceable one must always be different.

COCO CHANEL

Intention and Desire or Method and Behavior?

Often people attempt to live their lives backwards; they try to have more things, or more money, in order to do more of what they want, so they will be happier. The way it actually works is the reverse. You must first be who you really are, then do what you need to do, in order to have what you want.

MARGARET YOUNG

There are some things we want because we really want them. There are other things we want because we think they will give us what we really want. The first category I call *intentions* or *desires* . The second category I call *methods* or *behaviors* .

For example, you may say, ″I want a red sports car.″ I may say, ″Fine, and what do you want *from* the red sports car?″ ″I want adventure.″ The true desire or intention is, in fact, adventure. The red sports car was the method or behavior to get adventure.

Another example: If you say, ″I want more fun,″ I might ask, ″What can you do to have more fun?″ You could then give a long list of the things you find fun to do. In this case, *fun* is the intention or desire; the enjoyable activities you've listed are your methods or behaviors for achieving fun.

A person's intentions or desires are *experiences.* They are described by words such as freedom, security, power, happiness, self-worth, success, satisfaction, respect, peace of mind, adventure, love.

The methods or behaviors people use to have these experiences are *symbols* for ″the real thing.″ They include money, job or career, clothes, cars, house, marriage, family, sex, lovers, sex, physical appearance, sex, educational degrees, sex, and travel. (And food.)

One must not lose desires. They are mighty stimulants to creativeness, to love, and to long life.

ALEXANDER BOGOMOLETZ

When people want a physical thing--and, yes, a husband, wife, child, or lover is a physical thing--they are usually talking about methods or behaviors. When they discuss inner experiences, they are generally referring to intentions or desires.

There is nothing wrong with wanting the symbols. This section, in fact, will suggest many techniques (methods? behaviors?) for getting your fair share of symbols.

It helps, however, to know that the house, car, better body, career, or money you want--yes, even a romantic relationship, religion, or spiritual path--is simply a *method* or *behavior* to get something else: something inner, something experiential (security, fun, energy, satisfaction, love, knowledge of God, inner peace).

Why does it help to know this? First, if you know the experience you're looking for, you can make whole *lists* of methods and behaviors that might fulfill it. Love can be found in more places than romantic relationships. Fun can be found without having a million dollars.

You can make a list and "scientifically" investigate it to see if a certain method or behavior fulfills a given desire or intention. If yes, fine. If no, you've still got a long list to explore.

Second, knowing the experiences you seek helps you avoid fear and disappointment. Say you *know* you want adventure and think a red sports car is the way to get it. If the car does it, fine; add "red sports car" to the list of things that (for now) work. If the car doesn't do it, that doesn't mean adventure is out of your reach. Next method or behavior, please.

Third, and perhaps most important, you learn that *you* can fulfill your own desires and intentions without too much outside help. You can fulfill your own desires or intentions *right now*. Want love? Love yourself. Want joy? Be joyful. Want adventure? The last frontier is the interior.

As you can imagine, if *you* provide *yourself* with the experiences you seek, this decreases the frantic quality of pursuing the *symbols* of life. "I can't be happy until I get " "I won't rest until " "My life isn't complete until I." There's not a desire or intention we can't fulfill for ourselves, right now.

Ironically, once we give fully to ourselves, those symbols just seem to *cascade* in. Relationships, for example. Whom would you rather be around--a joyful, loving, happy person, or a miserable, needy, unhappy person? Well, so would everyone else. (People know this, which is why they *pretend* to be loving, happy, and joyful, in order to "catch" someone.)

When you are genuinely "up" because *you* are the source of your own "upness," people either do or do not relate to you--and whether they do or not is fine. As Frank Sinatra explains, "I bring my own crank."

The last time I saw him he was walking down Lover's Lane holding his own hand.

FRED ALLEN

You can use your behaviors and methods to discover your intentions and desires. Of each external "thing" you want, ask yourself, "What experience am I looking for?"

Experiences can be layers of an onion. Pleasure may be on the surface, but that's really a symbol for contentment, which is a symbol for peace of mind. Keep asking. Eventually you'll find experiences that are complete in and of themselves--experiences you're not using to achieve other experiences.

When you discover your fundamental desires and intentions, you'll know what you *really* want. Then, finding methods and behaviors to create the experiences is not only easier; it's more fun.

You Can Have Anything You Want, but You Can't Have Everything You Want

When I ask people that simple yet profound question, "What do you want?" they sometimes answer, "I want it all!" I often wonder, "If they had it all, where would they *put* it?"

I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the promised land. So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
THE NIGHT BEFORE HIS DEATH

There's an awful lot of "all" out there. And there's a lot more "all" to be experienced inside. The people who say they want "it all" either have not taken the time to explore what they really want, or don't realize one simple fact of life: "You can have *any* thing you want, but you can't have *every* thing you want."

Living on this planet has some down-to-earth limitations. First, we can put our body in only one place at a time. Second, there are only 24 hours a day, 365 (or 366) days per year. Third, the human lifetime is only so long (150 years seems to be tops).

The limitations become even more severe when we consider the time we spend on *maintenance:* sleeping, washing, eating--and some of us even have to make money to pay for all that.

We can't have "it all" because "all" is more than our "container" of time and space will hold.

Before you cry, "Foul!" consider: You *can* have *anything* you want. Pick what you want most and--if it's available, if it doesn't already belong to someone else (who wants to keep it)--you can have it.

The history books are full of people who said, "I don't care if everybody thinks it's impossible, *I* think it's possible, I want it, and I'm going to get it (or do it)." And they did. You can, too.

The catch? The more unobtainable the "want" you want, the more you must sacrifice to get it. It's not that you *can't* have it, it's that you'll have to give up many--and maybe all--other things.

I was once on a talk show and a woman called in. She said she wanted to be an actress more than anything else. She was quite upset that she hadn't succeeded yet. Our conversation went something like this:

The Wright brothers flew right through the smoke screen of impossibility.

CHARLES F. KETTERING

- "How much time do you spend on your career?"
- "I spend *all my time."*
- "You don't sleep?"
- "Of course I sleep."
- "Are you in a relationship?"
- "Yes, but I only see him four or five nights a week."
- "Do you have a job?"
- "Of course--I have to work to support my two daughters."
- "How old are your daughters?"
- "Four and eight."

As you can guess, this woman spent about an hour a week on her "career." What she meant to say was that she spent all of her *free time* pursuing acting. Unfortunately, it's not likely that an hour a week will give her the success she craves.

My advice to her? After establishing that she loved her daughters and loved her boyfriend and considered them more important than show biz, I suggested she be grateful for the choices she had *already made* and her successful implementation of them. I told her there were any number of successful actresses who wish they had two healthy children and a loving, romantic relationship. The acting? Make it a hobby.

The phrase "spending time" is a precise and accurate one. We all have only so much time this time around. Spend it well.

Who begins too much accomplishes little.

GERMAN PROVERB

It's as though you were in a large store (Earth). You are given enough money (time) to buy *anything* in the store, but not *everything* in the store. You can fit a lot of things in your cart (projects you start). When it comes time to pay, however, if your money runs out, that's it. And this store does not give refunds. At best, the store may reluctantly buy something back as used merchandise--at a fraction of what you paid for it.

Some people put a "want" in their cart--a new career, a relationship, a car, a house, a project--and fail to consider its cost: the time it will take to obtain *and maintain* the want.

They like to quote Edna St. Vincent Millay:

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But, ah, my foes, and, oh, my friends--
It gives a lovely light.

While reciting it, however, they are secretly worried about the wax dripping on the new rug--which hasn't yet been paid for. At some point, they find themselves "out of time," quoting Samuel Hoffenstein: "I burned my candle at both ends, and now have neither foes nor friends."

Some protest: "Time is money, and with money you can *buy* time." Up to a limit, that's true. But you can't hire someone to do all the things you want to do yourself (flying a plane, ballet, race car driving, reading, watching videos). And do you plan to hire people to spend time with your friends, eat your pizzas, or to entertain your lover(s)?

At a certain point in most everyone's life--rich, poor, organized, or scattered--the wants outnumber the available hours in the day. At that point, a want must go a-wanting.

The solution is preventative: choose carefully at the outset. Be grateful that, although you can't have *everything,* some very nice *anythings* await your selection.

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LIFE 101

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PART FOUR

TOOLS FOR SUCCESSFUL DOERS

What Do You Want?

I'd rather have roses on my table than diamonds on my neck.

EMMA GOLDMAN

I know you know the "right" answer to this question: "I don't want a red sports car, I want adventure!" But, *really,* do you still want the sports car? That's what this chapter is about--the red sports cars of life.

In order to *get* what you want, it's very helpful to *know* what you want. If you don't know where you want to go, you probably won't get there.

The key in all this is not *what* you want, but what *you* want. When asked to list the material things they want, people often get lost in glamour: what thing can I have or do that will make me *look good?*

Glamour is a problem. It's been a problem for millions of years: "My mastodon is better than your mastodon," "My pterodactyl can fly faster than your pterodactyl." Glamour is time and energy wasted impressing others with externals.

Be true to yourself when choosing what you want. What would please *you?* If a career is more important than a relationship, say so. Just because almost every movie, popular song, and toothpaste commercial implies you'll never be a whole person until you have another to share your life, doesn't mean you have to rearrange *your* priorities. If you'd rather be *making* the movies than making whoopee, that's fine.

Conversely, if what you *really* want is a relationship and a family, but your career-oriented friends find that hopelessly corny--tell 'em you're moving to Iowa where the corn grows tall.

I'd like a bird for an old lady of ninety-four. She had one, but it died and she doesn't realize it. She keeps it in a cage, talks to it, and takes it out and kisses its head.

CONTESTANT QUEEN FOR A DAY*Queen for a Day*

I don't mean to imply that you can't have both a career and a relationship. Some can, some can't (and some in the latter category haven't realized it yet). It depends on the price of the relationship, the cost of the career, and your payments on the other items already in your cart. People often sacrifice fulfilling relationships and rewarding careers to the graven idol of glamour.

So, what do you want? Would you like a list, from one to ten? Getting that list will take pen, paper, and about an hour. Please follow each step, and please write your answers down. Even if you're *sure* you know what number one is, do you know number five? And number one *may* surprise you.

Doing this exercise--although it's easy--is something we tend to avoid. We intuitively know that when we choose what we want, (a) we will have to give up some "good ideas" we simply don't have time for; and (b) there's a greater chance we *will* get what we truly want (which can be scary). Some, rather than face the loss and the fear, simply accept the status quo and continue just *reading* self-help books, thank you very much.

The only thing I ever dream is that I just won every beauty contest in the world and all the people I don't like are forced to build me a castle in France.

STEPHANIE VANDERKELLEN NEWHART

I encourage you to set your reservations aside and do the exercise anyway.

1. Write down everything you want. Don't worry about order, obtainability, or relative importance. As an item comes to mind, write it down. Remember, this is a list of *things* --symbols, methods, behaviors--you want. Experiences go on another list. If you want happiness, what are the things you think will bring you happiness? This is a list of things you want to have, do, and be (as in, "Be a doctor").
2. As you make your list, include what you have that you want to maintain. Your list may contain, "Maintain car, maintain house, maintain relationship."
3. When the list is complete, set it aside and do something else--anything else. Take a walk, take a nap, eat a peach.
4. Return to the list. Did you think of any more wants during the break? Add them to the list.

5. Read the list. Cross off any wants that seem silly or trivial. If you know "Walk the dog" is not going to make your top ten, cross it off. *"Take care of* the dog," however, might--so leave that one on.
6. With your purpose in mind, read the list again. Cross off any wants that oppose your purpose. If your purpose is "I am a friend to all," then cross off "Send John a stink bomb." If you haven't discovered your purpose yet, don't worry. Skip to number seven.
7. Classify each want into one of three categories: (A) those that are *very, very* important to you; (B) those that are *very* important to you; and (C) those that are important to you. If a want isn't important enough to make at least (C), cross it off.
8. On a clean sheet of paper, copy all your A's. If there are ten or more, stop. If there are not yet ten, copy all your B's. If there are ten or more A's plus B's, stop. If there are not ten or more A's and B's, either start over, because your list probably doesn't include all the things you want; or reclassify, because you assigned too few A's and B's.
9. With your new list (the A-B list), choose the *one thing* from that list you want *most* . Write that on a third sheet of paper. Cross that item off the A-B list. From the remaining items, pick the one that's most important. Write that on the third sheet of paper. Cross it off the A-B list. Do this eight more times. Stop.
10. You should now have ten items written on the third sheet of paper. Look at the list. Are any in *direct opposition* to any others? ("I want to stay married." "I want a divorce.") If there are, cross off the one that's the *lower* on the list. Pick another from the A-B list. That done, recopy the entire list on a clean sheet of paper. Number these one through ten. There's your list. This is what you want.

What about all those B's and C's? That's not the concern to focus on right now. Look at your top-ten list. Imagine enjoying each. How will you feel? What will you think? What experiences will you have when these are yours, completely and fully?

Experience that now.

Since the mind is a specific biocomputer, it needs specific instructions and directions. The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don't define them, or ever seriously consider them as believable or achievable. Winners can tell you where they are going, what they plan to do along the way, and who will be sharing the adventure with them.

DENIS WAITLEY

The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do.

WALTER BAGEHOT

Which Is More Powerful--the Invisible or the Visible?

A man is not idle because he is absorbed in thought. There is a visible labor and there is an invisible labor.

VICTOR HUGO
1862

Now that you have a list of the ten things you would most like, I am, of course, going to tell you to *go* get them; *get* busy; *make* them happen. *Do it!* Later.

First, let's talk about intangibles. Pop Quiz!

True or False: What we can see (the visible) is more powerful than what we can't see (the invisible).

By now, you're a good enough "student" to know how to psych out the "teacher." You know that I'll probably pick something other than the obvious, logical answer. And you're right. Even if you couldn't think of an invisible thing that was more powerful than a big, strong visible thing, you still *knew* I was going to say, "Invisible is more powerful." Even if you didn't know why, you'd probably answer the Pop Quiz question False.

Is that cheating? No. That's life. That's using everything for your learning, upliftment, and growth. Congratulations! Extra points if you answered the question correctly for the "wrong" reason.

But what if I had given you an essay exam? What if you had to *explain* yourself? Quentin Crisp will now tell us how to handle that:

If you're taking an essay exam on geography, and the exam could be on any of the countries in the world, study *one* country, and know it well. Let's say you choose China. When it comes time for the exam, and the question is, "Write one thousand words on Nigeria," you begin your essay, "Nigeria is nothing like China " and proceed to write everything you know about China.

We look at it and do not see it; Its name is The Invisible. We listen to it and do not hear it; Its name is The Inaudible. We touch it and do not find it; Its name is The Formless.

LAO-TZU
604-531 B.C.

So if you had studied, say, Mistakes, and I asked for one thousand words on The Visible vs. The Invisible, you could begin your essay, "When talking about the visible and the invisible, it's very easy to make a mistake. A mistake, after all, is " and write 980 additional words on mistakes.

Or, as Mark Twain once said, "Put all your eggs in one basket and WATCH THAT BASKET!"

Completely invisible thus far in this chapter is any sense of direction. You may be wondering, "What *is* the point?" I thought it might be good to have a little transitional patter between the *very* material desires of your top-ten list and the undeniably immaterial ideas of the next chapter ("The Power of Thoughts").

You see, in the next chapter I plan to take you to the source, the very foundation of getting those ten things you want (and lots of others). I found this transition jarring myself, so, as a segue, I thought we'd discuss the visible and invisible for a while.

If we observe the world around us, it's easy to see that what we can't see is more powerful than what we can.

Look at air, for example. Air is hard to "look at," of course, because it's invisible. (In the places where you can see the air--such as the third level of Hades or Los Angeles--what you're seeing is pollution, not air.)

On earth, air is more powerful than almost anything. It contains oxygen for animals and carbon dioxide for plants. Without air, both would die. Air is a lifeline that is so omnipresent (it's always as close as your next breath), we take it for granted. It's essential, yet it's invisible.

"All right," some may say, "What about something physical--like a *house?* You can see a house, and if someone dropped a house on you, it would kill you faster than taking air away from you, so wouldn't a house be more powerful?"

The power of the visible is the invisible.

MARIANNE MOORE

What would make the house fall? Gravity. If gravity didn't pull the house down, the house would have no power to destroy. It would just float there--like a freeze-frame from *The Wizard of Oz* .

And then there's light. You can't "see" light. It's when light reflects off something that we can see its *effects*. We can see the glow of the lightbulb, but we can't see the light traveling from the bulb to whatever it's illuminating.

If the sun radiates enough light to illuminate the earth, why is the space between here and the sun so dark? Because light waves are invisible until they strike something--namely the earth's atmosphere (which is made of our invisible friend, air; which is held in place by another invisible friend, gravity).

And heat? We can't *see* heat, but we can certainly *feel* it. If it weren't for the invisible atmosphere (air) of our planet, held in place by invisible gravity, holding invisible heat, do you know how cold the earth would be? Cold. About 280 degrees below zero at night. In summer.

Coolness is just as important for human survival--and until things approach the freezing point, coolness can't be easily perceived, either.

Can you tell the temperature of a tub of water by just looking at it? Unless it's hot enough to steam or cold enough to freeze, you probably can't. Can you tell how warm or cool a room is by seeing it through a pane of glass? Probably not.

Looking inside ourselves, we see our most powerful motivators can't be seen. Love, hate, passion, greed, fear, desire, lust, compassion, charity, goodness--all the emotions that set us in motion are invisible.

And thoughts, well, thoughts are so invisible (yes, you may be able to "see" your own thoughts, but nobody else can) and so powerful, they deserve a chapter unto themselves.

The Power of Thoughts

In the province of the mind, what one believes to be true either is true or becomes true.

JOHN LILLY

Every human achievement--from the Hoover Dam to the book you hold in your hand--began as a single thought. ("I'm gonna build a dam." "I'm gonna write a book.") Thoughts are powerful.

That single thought was, of course, followed by millions more. Some were optimistic ("Just what the world needs: another dam!" "Just what the world needs: another book!"). Some were perhaps pessimistic ("Just what the world needs: another damn book").

On the other hand, thoughts have little power at all. Without touching it, fold over the corner of this page. Think *hard* about folding over the corner of this page. Without touching it--or allowing anyone else to touch it--fold over the corner of this page. Focus all your mental strength, energy, attention, and power on folding over a corner. Either corner is fine. Just fold it over without, in any way, physically touching it.

At this point, many are inventing interesting ways to fold the corner over that fit the limitations I gave. "Maybe if I rub the book against the floor " This demonstrates the inventiveness of the human mind--and the knowledge that unless *something* is done physically to the page, the corner is *never* going to be folded over.

If you haven't yet "given up," that's fine. You can spend as much time as you like focusing thought-power alone on folding over the corner of this page. You can call friends. Form groups (whole movements, if you choose) dedicated to sending thoughts to fold the corner over.

Once you realize the point--that thoughts alone aren't going to do it--simply reach up and fold over the corner of this page. You don't have to even "think about it." Just--casually--reach up and fold the corner. It can be a little fold or a big fold--makes no difference.

Please do it, however.

I have found power in the mysteries of thought.

EURIPIDES
438 B.C.

There are other points to be made on the next page, and a folded-over corner of this page will help me make them.

Corner folded? Great.

Note the power of thoughts without action. In the physical world, seemingly little. Note the power of the physical action alone. So powerful as to be almost effortless. Most people didn't have to work to fold over the corner of a page. It was easy. Without the power of thought to guide it, however, human physical energy is like a mindless gorilla set loose

in a nuclear power plant. One can only hope the resultant damage is contained in the plant, and that certain buttons in the control room are not pushed.

When thought *and* action are combined, the results are powerful--among the most powerful forces on earth. The combination of successful communication--the sharing of thoughts--and physical action can, literally, move mountains.

If my goal were to fold over the corner of the facing page in this book, but I failed to communicate that thought to you, it's doubtful that the corner would have gotten folded over.

Consider the difficulty *I*--Peter McWilliams--would have had folding over the page in *this* book if I had to do it myself. Without your assistance, it would have been a near-insurmountable task.

I would have had to travel from wherever I was to wherever you were, gotten your attention, waited while you read to that page in the book, said, "Excuse me," picked up the book, folded over the corner, handed it back to you and said, "Thank you."

Thus only can you gain the secret isolated joy of the thinker, who knows that, a hundred years after he is dead and forgotten, men who never heard of him will be moving to the measure of his thought.--the subtle rapture of a postponed power, which the world knows not because it has no external trappings, but which to his prophetic vision is more real than that which commands an army..

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, JR.
1886

With your help, however, it was easy. All I had to do was write a few sentences. All you had to do was reach up and fold over the corner. A *successfully communicated thought,* from one human mind to another, is one of the most powerful forces I know.

Does it always work? Nah. You can successfully communicate a thought, and the other person can do nothing about it. You can successfully communicate a thought, and the other person may do just the opposite.

But when it does work, ah, there is power, grace, and magic.

Courage is the price that life exacts for granting peace. The soul that knows it not, knows no release From little things; Knows not the livid loneliness of fear, Nor mountain heights where bitter joy can hear The sound of wings.

AMELIA EARHART

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART FOUR

TOOLS FOR SUCCESSFUL DOERS

Fielding Your Dreams

Baseball is fun for you & me. There is batting and fielding and making an out, There is doubles & triples and even home runs, But what I like about baseball is for the fun.

MATT BOHN
AT AGE 11

How powerful are thoughts that become dreams? Here is an example.

A writer, W. P. Kinsella, sat in Calgary, Canada, and had a thought: what if an Iowa corn farmer had a dream, and, combining that dream with action, he was able to reunite with his father, who had died many years earlier, for a game of baseball?

Kinsella did something about his dream. He wrote a novel called *Shoeless Joe.* The book was read by film director Phil Alden Robinson. Without their ever meeting, the dream (thought) was passed (successfully communicated). Robinson's dream was to write and direct a film based on the book. His dream, too, was for Kevin Costner to play the farmer who converts some of his farmland into a baseball field.

He successfully communicated his dream to Costner, who helped pass the dream along to some money-people in Hollywood. Many successfully communicated dreams later, a film was made--*Field of Dreams* .

It was (and is) a great film, a great success (Hollywood translation: it made a lot of money), and an Academy Award nominee.

Well and good. But the power of that dream didn't end there.

The farm on which the film was shot is owned by Don Lansing. Since the film's opening, thousands of people--moved by the power of a dream--have traveled to Dyersville, Iowa, to see the field, play a little baseball, get married (really, at home plate)--but mostly to affirm that dreams can, and do, come true.

It's not just my parents who believe they'll see Matt on the field, it's me too. I'll see Matt through my heart. You have to believe before you can see things on the field, and if you believe, you'll see.

STEPHANIE BOHN
AT AGE 9

But the story is *still* not over.

(If you haven't seen the film, now is a wonderful time to set down the book, go rent the video, watch it, and return to this spot for the conclusion of this story.)

Here is a letter Lansing received in the fall of 1989:

Dear Don,

You don't know me; my name is Jim Bohn. My son Matt and mother-in-law Lena Blaha died in the crash of United Airlines Flight 232 in Sioux City on July 19.

This past spring I had taken my son and family to see the movie "Field of Dreams." We loved the movie. I had no idea that the "field" was still there. I figured that after the filming it had been replanted. To my surprise and delight, I read an article last evening in our Pittsburgh (PA.) Press newspaper that you have been maintaining the field. How long do you plan to maintain it as the baseball field? Will you still receive visitors next summer? We are planning to visit Sioux City next summer for the anniversary of the crash and would love to stop and visit the field.

Matt was 12 and loved baseball. So do I, as my father before me did. I've always coached Matt's team. For the past 6 years we have had a great time enjoying each other and baseball.

As you may know the plane crashed in an Iowa corn field. I found the whole idea very ironic; the story of an Iowa corn farmer who plows up his corn field to make a baseball field where dreams come true and my son, who loved baseball, dying in an Iowa corn field. My dreams came to an end.

When I was in Sioux City after the crash, I stayed at Briar Cliff College. From my room the most prominent object in the landscape was a baseball field. I could not stop thinking about the movie, the crash and a corn field in Iowa. There was message there.

When I read the article last evening I knew I had to visit the "field." Please let me know of your plans for the field. I hope I will have the chance to walk with my son one more time.

I was able to read your letter.--If the movie means anything to me now it's that you get that chance to walk with your son.--I am with you in spirit.--Love, Kevin.

KEVIN COSTNER

It does not matter how slowly you go so long as you do not stop.

CONFUCIUS

A single thought, by a writer living in Canada, became a dream inspiring millions, and gave comfort to a family in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Thus, the power of a dream.
UPDATE: As it turned out, I rewrote this chapter only two days after the September 1994 USAir crash en route to Pittsburgh. I called Jim, Cindy, and Stephanie (who will be fourteen in three weeks). They told me that although the recent tragedy brought back painful memories, they have nevertheless volunteered to help some of the families devastated by the crash. The dream--the gift, and life--goes on.

The Thought-Feeling-Action Pyramid

When people say to me: "How do you do so many things?" I often answer them, without meaning to be cruel: "How do you do so little?" It seems to me that people have vast potential. Most people can do extraordinary things if they have the confidence or take the risks. Yet most people don't. They sit in front of the telly and treat life as if it goes on forever.

PHILIP ADAMS

Successful achievement requires the use and coordination of thoughts, feelings, and actions. They form the three sides of a triangle--a pyramid.

Like a stool that requires at least three legs for stability, ongoing accomplishment requires thoughts, feelings, and actions for success.

Thoughts spark the process, get it going. Feelings keep the thoughts alive, encourage similar thoughts, and get the body moving. Action is important to accomplish the physical tasks necessary for achievement.

Without all three, the pyramid collapses.

Commitment

To change one's life:

1. *Start immediately.*
2. *Do it flamboyantly.*
3. *No exceptions.*

William James

One of the most powerful tools in the achievement tool kit is the combination of commitment and action. W. H. Murray, in *The Scottish Himalayan Expedition,* explained it:
Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that *the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too.* All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets:
Whatever you can do,
or dream you can, begin it.
Boldness has genius,
power and magic in it.

When you're so committed to something you *know* it's going to happen, you act as though it's going to happen. That action is a powerful affirmation.

If you sit back and *say* you're committed, but wait for conclusive proof before you act, little is likely to happen. It's called "playing it safe." I don't recommend that game. Not only is it ineffective and demoralizing, it's already being played by people who are absolute *masters* at it. The field, in fact, is overcrowded. You'll have to study long and hard to beat them at that game.

Be bold. Commit and act. Your action indicates the depth of your commitment. Action can also determine the measure of support you'll get from others.

If you tell friends, "I'm going to visit Hawaii, someday," they'll probably say, "That's nice." If you tell them, however, while heading for the door, suitcase in hand, a nonrefundable ticket in the pocket of your funny-looking flowered shirt, your friends are more likely to say, "Can we drive you to the airport? Do you need anything? Can we help you carry your lei?"

What is your purpose? Commit to it.

What experiences do you want? Commit to giving yourself those experiences regularly.

Look at your top-ten list. Commit to each goal.

You are, in fact, not committing to any *project*. You are committing to yourself.

The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.

HERBERT SPENCER

Your Word and How to Keep It

Never esteem anything as of advantage to you that will make you break your word or lose your self-respect.

MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS
121-180 A.D.

Your word is one of the most precious things you own. Do not give it lightly. Once given, do everything within your power not to break it. A broken word, like a broken cup, cannot hold very much for very long.

Does *one* broken agreement matter? One broken agreement is like a grain of sand. To a lake, one grain of sand is nothing. Gather enough grains of sand, however, and a lake becomes a swamp. Add enough more, and it becomes a bog. (Ever feel bogged down?) Add enough more, and it becomes a desert. (Did you ever feel barren inside? Did you ever plant a dream and wonder why it did not grow?)

No, one grain of sand doesn't much matter (unless, of course, the winds of fate blow it back in your eye). Gather enough grains day after day for a lifetime, and your only effective action might be sandbagging.

Most of us look back on a seemingly endless trail of broken agreements. That's a lot of sand. Is it, then, hopeless? Not at all. Declare your past broken agreements a *beach,* and get on with your life. (The techniques given in the chapters "For Giving" and "For Getting" are especially useful, as is the exercise in "Heal the Past.")

I phoned my dad to tell him I had stopped smoking. He called me a quitter.

STEVEN PEARL

If our word is so important, what (or who) would keep us from keeping it? Once again, I present a familiar cast of characters: rebels, the unconscious, comfort junkies, and approval seekers. (By the way, don't get too down on this unworthiness tribe; the Master Teachers employ them as Master Testers. They're friends, too.)

Rebels will break a rule just because it's a rule. "Rules are for fools!" they claim. They consider agreements of any kind--including ones they make, involving things they want to do--rules. They claim they have no commitments in life--only options.

The Unconscious use the excuse, "I forgot!" whenever an agreement is broken (which is often). If they genuinely *did* forget, they consider that a sufficient explanation. When asked, "Why didn't you write it down," the unconscious may say, "I meant to, but I forgot." They misplaced their datebook. Where? You know the answer to that one.

Comfort Junkies will keep agreements--if they want to at the moment. If it means doing something uncomfortable, however, they don't do it. This is most of the time. To make an agreement is easy. (It's less uncomfortable than saying no.) To actually *do* something when the time arrives is not comfortable. Calling and saying they won't be there is uncomfortable, too, so they avoid the whole situation.

Approval Seekers will agree to do something because, when they do, they get approval. Their schedules become hopelessly overcrowded, so keeping all those conflicting agreements becomes impossible. Their reasons for breaking agreements are excellent ones, however: visiting the sick, feeding the homeless, feeding pet butterflies (I tried it; it worked)--designed to get approval even while breaking an agreement.

One must have a good memory to be able to keep the promises one makes.

NIETZSCHE

How to keep agreements? A few suggestions:

1. Make only agreements you plan to keep. Learn to say no, or maybe, or I'll get back to you (and *do* get back to them). If you don't want to do *now* whatever it is you're agreeing to do *later,* you probably won't want to do it when the time comes, so make your "no" known now.
2. 2. Make every agreement important. Some play the game, "This agreement is more important than that agreement." In terms of ramifications "out there," that may be true, but inside yourself, each time you break your word, no matter how seemingly trivial, it costs.
3. Keep the agreements you've made. Even if keeping an agreement is uncomfortable, outrageously expensive, or in some way seemingly prohibitive--keep it anyway. Doing this may show you--experientially--the wisdom of suggestion #1. Slip-sliding out of agreements at the last minute will only show you that you know how to slip-slide out of agreements at the last minute. Most of us already know how to do that fairly well.
4. Write agreements down. Keep a calendar or datebook. Record your agreements. Review the calendar at least once a day.
5. Communicate. If a conflict arises and you may have to rearrange an agreement, communicate as soon as you discover the conflict. There are at least two ways to reschedule an agreement: "Something more important than keeping my agreement with you has come up, so let's reschedule," or, "We have an agreement, and I'm willing to keep it, but I'd really appreciate it if we could move it to another time." Which do you suppose is more accountable, courteous, and recommended? (By the way, if you use the second approach, don't do it as a technique--mean it. If the other person says, "I want you to keep your agreement anyway," be prepared to keep it.)

When you lovingly keep your word--keep it safe, keep it strong, keep it true--you will know the power of it. When you lend it to a cause--especially one of your own choosing--its effect will be powerful. Its effect will be known.

The price of greatness is responsibility.

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

Discipline

For the very true beginning of wisdom is the desire of discipline; and the care of discipline is love.

WISDOM OF SOLOMON 6:17

Most of us associate the word *discipline* with punishment of a precise and exacting nature--fourth-grade teachers and the military are notorious for discipline. To call someone a disciplinarian is seldom a compliment.

To call someone Machiavellian is usually not nice, either. Maybe it was Machiavelli who gave discipline a bad name. In 1532 he wrote,

A prince should therefore have no other aim or thought but war and discipline, for that is the only art that is necessary to one who commands.

The word *discipline* comes from two very nice words: *discipulus*, meaning pupil, and *discere*, to learn. Discipline, then, is devotion to learning.

I like to think of discipline not as forcing yourself to do *without* (the austerity school), but as keeping your attention focused on what you *want.*

When your attention is focused on what you want, the emotions and body tend to follow. Our attention is like a flashlight beam in a dark room. What we focus the beam on, we emotionally respond to, and move our body accordingly. As Schiller wrote in 1799, "The eye sees the open heaven, / The heart is intoxicated with bliss."

For example, are you content reading this book? If so, that's the thing to focus on. You could, if you wanted to feel deprived, think about *everything else in the entire world* you *could* be doing *right now* except that you are *sacrificing all those incredible experiences* to sit and read this book. But this book is supposed to be *good for you,* so keep sitting here reading it, *no matter how much you want to do all those other wonderful things*.

This is how many people view discipline. My suggestion? Focus on what you're doing. If what you're doing at the moment is not entirely pleasing (I don't mean *this* moment with *this* book, of course; I mean *some other* moment with *some other* book), ask yourself, "Does what I'm doing lead to something that *is* pleasing?" If yes, then focus on the pleasant goal. If no, do something else.

That's being a disciple.

Liberty is a beloved discipline.

GEORGE C. HOMANS

Unified, disciplined, armed with the secret powers of the atom and with knowledge as yet beyond dreaming, Life, forever dying to be born afresh, forever young and eager, will presently stand upon this earth as upon a footstool and stretch out its realm amidst the stars.

H. G. WELLS
1920

Positive Focusing

Beaver: *Gee, there's something wrong with just about everything, isn't there Dad?*
Ward: *Just about, Beav.*

Ever wonder why it's so difficult to keep negative thoughts out of your mind for any period of time? Ever berate yourself for not being able to hold a more positive thought longer? There's no need for self-reproach; the odds are so stacked against us, the fact that we have *any* positive thought *at all* is something of a miracle.

Here's what we're up against:

1. The Fight or Flight Response. This is an in-built, physiological response to danger. When danger is perceived (not actually happening, mind you, just *perceived)* the body reacts. The body calls an All Alert and prepares to either fight or flee *for its life* .

   This was a very handy response for millions of years, but today, for most of us, it's counterproductive. (If you are a police officer, a firefighter, or make your living as a contestant on television game shows, the Fight or Flight Response may still come in handy.)

   Part of the Fight or Flight Response is focusing the mind on *what's wrong* in the environment. This was helpful in the days when humans had to find the saber-tooth tigers before the tigers found them. Today, this intense, life-or-death searching for "What's wrong?" usually unearths *something* that's not right. That "something" may trigger another round of the Fight or Flight Response. The truly bad news? All of this negative-fact finding is *completely* automatic.

   Nobody, as long as he moves about among the chaotic currents of life, is without trouble.

   CARL JUNG

2. Childhood programming. As I've mentioned before, our parents, often, trained us by telling us what *not* to do. All the things we did correctly--and there were many--were quickly accepted (and then expected) as "normal" behavior. Our occasional departures from our parents' Ideal Child Behavioral Matrix? The boom lowered. (You can skip this point if your parents were the kind who smiled and said, "Isn't that sweet? What remarkable individuality you're showing, dear, by pouring honey on the cat!") Is it any wonder, even today, we sometimes find ourselves unconsciously scanning the environment, looking for *bad* things *not* to do?

3. The general negativity around us. We turn on the news, and what's the news? *Bad* news. We pick up the newspaper and what do we read? News of fresh disasters. Commercials warn us of bad breath, body odor, constipation, how it feels when a sesame seed gets caught under dentures.

   The favorite conversation? Gossip. The favorite activity? Complaining. Between 4:00 and 7:00 p.m., in cocktail lounges all over town, the citizenry gathers for the daily meeting of the Ain't-It-Awful Club. For the price of a drink (and you get two-for-one), you can tell your day's troubles to a stranger--providing you are willing to listen for an equal length of time to the stranger's woes. For some unknown reason, this is called The Happy Hour.

4. Everything's falling apart (entropy). How do you like this entropy law? Everything is in a state of deterioration. Leave something alone, and it rots. We know that, but do we need a mathematical formula to tell us how fast? Entropy comes from a Greek word meaning transformation. What they really mean is that everything is transforming into something *worse* .
5. Genetics. Well, there's nothing much we can do about *that,* now is there? Hopeless.

All of this internal and external programming will, naturally, lead to negative thoughts. *No big deal.* Really. Let them drift through your mind like leaves on a patio. There's no need to resist them, hold onto them, or entertain them (I'm talking about thoughts here, not leaves).

What's important is your *focus* . Where--in the big picture--are you putting your attention? If you're focused on your *goal,* you can have any number of positive and negative thoughts along the way. (And probably will.)

It's a journey. As long as you keep moving toward your destination, you're doing fine. It's when you stop moving, or are not moving toward your destination, that some "course correction" is in order.

Those who enjoy being on the train, and those who do not enjoy being on the train, get to the same destination at the same time. Yes, there are things you can do to enjoy the train more. Lots of techniques for enjoyment are given in the next section (Part Five). For now, however, know that being on the train that's going in the direction of your choice is all it takes.

Naturally, the more positive thoughts you have, the more positive you'll feel. If you want to feel happy, think about happy things. An unending stream of "happy thoughts" is not, however, necessary to reach your goal.

Motion and *direction* are.

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART FOUR

TOOLS FOR SUCCESSFUL DOERS

Affirmations

The only reason I would take up jogging is so that I could hear heavy breathing again.

ERMA BOMBECK The words "I am" are potent words; be careful what you hitch them to. The thing you're claiming has a way of reaching back and claiming you.

A. L. KITSELMAN

Affirm means to make firm, solid, more real. Thoughts--not very solid--when repeated over and over, become more and more firm. They become feelings, behaviors, methods, experiences, and things. What we think about, we can become.

We affirm all the time. Sometimes we affirm negatively; sometimes we affirm positively. In the words of Henry Ford, "If you think you can do a thing, or think you can't do a thing; you're right."

I, of course, am going to suggest that you consciously affirm the positive. Many of us already have the unconscious habit of affirming the negative. To change that, I quote Johnny Mercer, "You've got to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, latch on to the affirmative."

Affirmations often begin with "I am." "I am a happy, healthy, wealthy person." "I am joyful no matter what is happening around me." "I am loving and kind." If you're affirming for material things, it's a good idea to start even those with "I am." "I am enjoying my new house." "I am creative and content in my new career."

Affirmations are best expressed in the present. "I want a new car," affirms *wanting* a new car. If what you want is *wanting* a new car, then that's a good affirmation. What you probably want, however, is the *car.* "I am safely and happily enjoying my beautiful new car." Affirm as though you already have what you want, even though you don't yet have it. (The operative word is "yet.")

No matter how "impossible" something may seem, put it into an affirmation and give it a try. Say it, out loud, at least one hundred times before you decide how "impossible" something might be. After one hundred repetitions, you may find yourself quite comfortable with the idea.

You can write affirmations on paper and put them in places you will see them often--on the bathroom mirror, refrigerator, next to your bed, on the car dashboard. You can also record them on endless-loop cassette tapes and play them in the background all day (and night).

A powerful technique is to say your affirmation while looking into your eyes in a mirror. All your limitations about the thing you're affirming are likely to surface, but persevere. Outlast the negative voices. Plant the seed of your affirmation deep.

Your purpose is already an affirmation. Say it to yourself often. Create affirmations for each of the experiences you want. They can be very simple: "I am content." "I am joyful and calm in the peace of my mind." "I am feeling love." "I am strong and powerful." Also, write several affirmations for each item on your top-ten list.

I'd love to see Christ come back to crush the spirit of hate and make men put down their guns. I'd also like just one more hit single.

TINY TIM

Affirmations work if you use them. The more you use them, the more they work. They can be used anywhere, anytime, while doing almost anything.

It's a good idea to end all your affirmations with " this or something better, for the highest good of all concerned."

The " this or something better " lets ten million come in when you merely asked for a million, and " for the highest good of all concerned" assures that your affirmation is fulfilled in a way that's best for everyone.

Learn to automatically turn all your wishes and wants into affirmations. Then start catching your negative thoughts, switching them around, and

making affirmations out of them. By only slightly revising the negative chatter (changing "can't" to "can," "won't" to "will," "hate" to "love," etc.), you can turn all those formerly limiting voices into a staff of in-house affirmation writers.

Affirmation of life is the spiritual act by which man ceases to live unreflectively and begins to devote himself to his life with reverence in order to raise it to its true value. To affirm life is to deepen, to make more inward, and to exalt the will to live.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Here are a few to get you started, but this is a very brief list.

- "I am feeling warm and loving toward myself."
- "I am worthy of all the good in my life."
- "I am one with the Universe, and I have more than I need."
- "I am happy that I always do the best I can with what I know and always use everything for my advancement."
- "I am forgiving myself unconditionally."
- "I am grateful for my life."
- "I am loving and accepting myself and others."
- "I am treating all problems as opportunities to grow in wisdom and love."
- "I am relaxed, trusting in a higher plan that's unfolding for me."
- "I am automatically and joyfully focusing on the positive."
- "I am giving myself permission to live, love, and laugh."
- "I am creating and singing affirmations to create a joyful, abundant, fulfilling life."
- "this or something better for the highest good of all concerned."

Effectiveness vs. Efficiency

It's no good running a pig farm badly for thirty years while saying, "Really I was meant to be a ballet dancer." By that time, pigs will be your style.

QUENTIN CRISP

The best comparison between effectiveness and efficiency I've heard is this: Efficiency is getting the job done *right* . Effectiveness is getting the *right job done.*

People who excel in life--the so-called "winners"--don't do twice as much or five times as much or a hundred times as much as "average" people. Winners, it has been shown, only do *a few percentage points more* than everybody else.

The winner of a two-hour marathon need only be a few seconds ahead of all the other runners to win. First, second, and third place winners can all come in within a minute of each other. The 20,000 other runners are simply numbers.

In business, the winners often make only five more phone calls per day than average or read five more journals per month or get five more good ideas per year.

But it's not *volume* or *speed* I'm necessarily talking about. In athletic competition, as in life, it's not *how many* events you win, but *which ones* that determine the champions.

Some explain this distinction with what's called the 80/20 theory: 80% of your effort produces 20% of your results, and 20% of your effort produces the other 80% of your results.

The theory claims that you spend 80% of your time wearing 20% of your clothes, and 20% of your time wearing 80% of your clothes; you spend 80% of your time with 20% of your friends, and 20% of your time with 80% of your friends; you spend 80% of your career resources producing 20% of your results, and 20% of your resources producing 80% of your results; and so on.

I take my children everywhere, but they always find their way back home.

ROBERT ORBEN

These aren't precise figures, of course. They do, however, show that *effort* and *r esults* are not necessarily in direct proportion--not even close, in fact.

If the 80/20 theory is even partially true, imagine what would happen if you started taking time and resources from the less effective 80% activities and moved them to the highly effective 20% activities. One percent more *effective* action would produce 5% more results.

How can you tell the 20% more effective action from the other 80%? Watch. Look. Listen. "I keep six honest serving men / (They taught me all I knew); / Their names are What and Why and When / And How and Where and Who" (Rudyard Kipling). Keep track of what you do and the results it produces.

You'll notice patterns emerging. "I spend as much time doing A as doing B, but B produces twice as many results." When you notice that, take a little time from A and give it to B. See what happens. You will probably get less from A, but do you get proportionately more from B?

Here's my nursery rhyme for today (if it's good enough for Rudyard Kipling): "Life's experiments are great fun. / This is but another one."

It's Not That People Plan to Fail, They Just Fail to Plan

While one person hesitates because he feels inferior, the other is busy making mistakes and becoming superior.

HENRY C. LINK

Here is the truth about making a plan: The plan itself never works. If, however, you *do* make a plan, the chances of getting what you want significantly increase.

Let's say you made a plan to do something. You broke your goal into action steps, and estimated the amount of time each step would take. The plan called for step A to take one week, step B to take two weeks, step C to take one week, step D to take a month, and step E to take a day. This would lead you to F, which is what you want.

When you get to F, however, you may look back on your original plan with amusement: Almost nothing went "according to plan." Step A took only a day. Step B took a week. Step C, as it turned out, had five subsets, taking two weeks *each.* When you got to step D, you discovered that nobody did step D anymore. Step E took ten minutes.

Without the faulty plan, however, you might never have ventured forth to learn all you needed to know to get to F. F is where you wanted to go; F is where you got. You just didn't get there the way you had planned. So, even though it's probably not going to be accurate, make a plan anyway.

If you don't already have one, get a date book of some kind with room for daily planning. Then start laying out your step-by-step progression to accomplish each goal on your top-ten list. I strongly suggest you plan *at least* one activity to move toward *each* of your top ten *each week.*

Why?

Ready for a hard truth? *If you're not actively involved in getting what you want, you don't really want it.*

Zeus does not bring all men's plans to fulfillment.

HOMER

People kid themselves for years--decades, sometimes--with a goal that, in fact, they don't really want. How do I know they didn't want it? Because they never really did anything to get it. If they really wanted it, they would have, over the years, consistently done something to get it.

People look back and say, "I coulda been" or "I coulda had." Maybe, but they also "coulda" done more to obtain it. I don't want you to face a case of the coulda's. Please do something about each item on your top-ten list every week.

After a few months of doing something each week, you may discover you don't want one of your goals after all. Without the action, however, you might not have known it. If you decide you don't want it, a slot in your top-ten list has just opened up.

If you're scheduling things *not* related to your top-ten list, and finding you "don't have time" for things on your top-ten list, I suggest you either (a) rearrange your top-ten list, or (b) rearrange your schedule.

Break each of your top-ten goals into *next doable steps.* A doable step is something you can actually do. "Learn to use a computer," is too vague. "Call friends who have a computer and ask the best way to learn to use a computer," is a doable step. You can schedule that one--give it a date, time, and duration. (April 16, 4:00 p.m., two hours.) If you can't assign it a date, time, and duration, there's probably a more doable next step available.

Then start writing these steps in your date book. Schedule your time. Budget your time as you would budget your money. Use a pencil, as you're apt to make changes, but do commit to the steps you put in your book. Be flexible, of course. This is meant to be a spur to action, not a hog-tie.

For the next few weeks, plan hour by hour. The next month, day by day. The months after that, week by week. When you project a project to completion, pick another and start scheduling that.

Sitting with the days of your life before you--all the time you have to spend on *everything*--and allocating time can be confusing, exhilarating, painful, exciting, and fearful.

But please do it. One thing's for sure: you'll spend that time doing *something.* The only question is: do you want to control your time, or do you want your time to control you?

We can act as if there were a God; feel as if we were free; consider Nature as if she were full of special designs; lay plans as if we were to be immortal; and we find then that these words do make a genuine difference in our moral life.

WILLIAM JAMES

Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood.

DANIEL HUDSON BURNHAM

Get Off Your Buts!

You said, "but." I've put my finger on the whole trouble. You're a "but" man. Don't say, "but." That little word "but" is the difference between success and failure. Henry Ford said, "I'm going to invent the automobile," and Arthur T. Flanken said, "But. . ."

SGT. ERNIE BILKO
THE PHIL SILVERS SHOW

You know what life is for; you know what your limitations are; you know the true identity of your Master Teachers; you have tools, tools, and more tools; you know what you want; you've planned it out--all right--ready, set Do it!

When the time comes to *do it,* panic descends.

The unworthiness warriors march out in full regalia. Rebellion says, ″But why should I do it *his* way? I'll do it *my way* in *my own time.*″ Unconsciousness stumbles forward and says, ″But this is all too much to keep track of.″ The approval seeker compliments me on the book's cover, but claims to be already overcommitted.

In situations of action vs. status quo, however, one of the unworthiness tribe stands head and shoulders above the rest: the comfort junkie.

Consider this: people have precisely what they want in their lives--not what they *think* they want, but what they *actually want.*

Victory belongs to the most persevering.

NAPOLEON

What we have is based on moment-to-moment choices of what we *do.* In each of those moments, we choose. We either take a risk and move toward what we want, or we play it safe and choose

comfort.

Most of the people, most of the time, choose comfort. In the end, people either have excuses or experiences; reasons or results; buts or brilliance; they either have what they wanted, or they have a detailed list of all the reasons why not (rationalize = rational lies).

Almost all excuses and reasons are motivated by fear--fear of fatigue, fear of not doing it perfectly, fear of looking foolish, fear of mistakes, fear of losing, fear of being let down, fear of facing unworthiness, fear of getting angry; in short, fear that we might be uncomfortable.

We tell ourselves, "I won't do this now; I'm too tired, *but* I'll do it tomorrow when I can make a fresh start." The next morning, "I'm not in the mood, *but* I'll do it this afternoon." Come afternoon, there's some other "important" activity. Our original "plan" is postponed till evening, when friends just happen to stop over, *but* everything is put off until the following morning--*but* again.

The reasons for the postponements, by the way, are not always unpleasant. Sometimes they are the most wonderful, positive "opportunities" imaginable: a party, a trip, a dinner, friends, relationships, "easy money," and so on.

I call them all--positive or negative--the same thing: distractions. If they're not definite steps on the way to *your* goals, they're distractions.

When a distraction arises, ask yourself: would you rather have the distraction, or would you rather have your goal? It's tough to see it that way, because the goal of, say, writing a book may mean an entire evening spent researching a dull but important detail. This research cannot compare to the fun of the party to which you've just been invited.

The right question to ask yourself is: which is more *important,* the party or the book? *Not:* which is more appealing at this moment, the party or the dull research? After a thousand choices--distraction vs. work--you will have either (a) an extensive collection of party favors, or (b) a book.

These choices are made daily, hourly, moment-by-moment.

If you want to achieve more, declare your reasons unreasonable, your excuses inexcusable--and get off your buts!

The Comfort Zone

In Endymion, I leaped headlong into the sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the soundings, the quicksands, and the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea and comfortable advice.

JOHN KEATS
1818

We all live within the comfort zone. It's the arena of activities we have done often enough to feel comfortable doing again. For most, this includes walking, talking, driving, spending time with friends, making money in certain ways--all those once-difficult and fearful things that we now find easy and comfortable.

Imagine the comfort zone as a circle: Inside the circle are those things we are comfortable doing; outside is everything else. The wall of the circle is not, alas, a wall of protection. It is a wall of fear; a wall of limitation.

The *illusion* is that the wall keeps us from bad things and keeps bad things from us. In reality, the bad things get in just fine (perhaps you've noticed). In reality, too, the wall prevents us from getting what we want.

When we do something new, something different, we push against the parameters of our comfort zone. If we do the new thing often enough, we overcome the fear, guilt, unworthiness, hurt feelings, and anger, and our comfort zone expands. If we back off and honor the limitation, our comfort zone shrinks. It's a dynamic, living thing, always expanding or contracting.

When our comfort zone expands in one area, it expands in other areas as well. When we succeed at something, our confidence and self-esteem increase, and we take that confidence and self-esteem with us into other endeavors.

When we "give in" to our comfort zone, the zone contracts. Our belief that we "aren't strong enough," "can't do it" and are, basically, "not good enough" often prevents us from even *thinking* about approaching "the wall" again for some time.

For some, the comfort zone shrinks to the size of their apartment: they never leave home without anxiety; some people never leave home at all. They sit and watch the news on TV. The news certainly supports the notion

that it's a hostile, dangerous place out there, and it's better to stay home.

For a few, the comfort zone shrinks to a space smaller than their own body. We've all probably seen or heard of institutionalized people who are afraid to move any part of their body in any direction. That is when the comfort zone "wins" its greatest victory.

That and suicide. The "it" some people refer to when they "just can't take it anymore" is the need to *constantly* be confronting the fear of leaving the comfort zone just to keep the fear at bay.

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. Security does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than exposure.

HELEN KELLER

Here is one of the great ironies of life: Those who are doing what they want to do and are consciously expanding their comfort zone at every opportunity experience *no more fear* than people who are passively trying to keep life "as comfortable as possible."

Fear is a part of life. Some people feel fear when they press against their comfort zone and make it larger. Other people feel fear when they even *think* they *might* do something that gets them even *close* to the (ever-shrinking, in their case) boundary of their comfort zone. *Both feel the same fear.*

In fact, people in shrinking comfort zones probably feel more fear. They not only feel fear; they also feel the fear of feeling fear; and the fear of the fear of feeling fear; and on and on. The person who develops the habit of moving through fear when it appears, feels it only once. It's the old "A coward dies a thousand deaths, a brave man dies but one."

Some people don't just honor their comfort zone, they *worship* it. When they feel fear, they think it is God saying to them, personally and directly, "Don't do this." Some have, in fact, found scriptural references to support their inaction. Not doing new things becomes a matter of *morality*. Those pagans who "don't listen to God" and have the audacity to try new things are not only damned, they should be locked up.

A coward dies a hundred deaths, a brave man only once But then, once is enough, isn't it?

JUDGE HARRY STONE
NIGHT COURT

For these dear souls, I have two quotes: "And the angel said unto them, `Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people'" (Luke 2:10). Those shepherds who were afraid to "try something new" (listening to an angel in a field) never made it to the manger. And then in 1 John 4:18: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." This is my favorite method of expanding the comfort zone: Love it all.

In the air conditioning trade, "the comfort zone" is the range of temperatures on the thermostat (usually around 72 degrees) in which neither heating nor air conditioning is needed. It's also called "the dead zone."

That's the result of honoring the comfort zone too much, too often: a sense of deadness; a feeling of being trapped in a life not of our desiring, doing things not of our choosing, spending time with people we don't like.

The answer? *DO IT! Let's Get Off Our Buts.* At your local bookstore, or call 1-800-LIFE-101. Feel the fear, and do it anyway. *Physically move* to accomplish those things you choose. Eventually, learn to make friends with the Master Teacher fear.

Learn to love it all.

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LIFE 101

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PART FOUR

TOOLS FOR SUCCESSFUL DOERS

Money

Many a time we've been down to our last piece of fatback. And I'd say, "Should we eat it, or render it down for soap?" Your Uncle Jed would say, "Render it down. God will provide food for us poor folks, but we gotta do our own washin'." GRANNY
THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES
We have so many conflicting beliefs about money in our culture. Some are uplifting, some are "downpushing." It's little wonder that the way most people feel about money is simply confused.

If you want money, here's how to get it:

1. *Reduce the number of limiting beliefs you have about money.*
2. *Increase the positive beliefs you hold.*
3. *Do what it takes to get money.*

Money is simply a symbol of energy. I use money so that, as an author, I don't have to carry books with me and trade them for whatever it is I want. ("How many scoops of vanilla fudge almond can I get for a book about life?")

It's a convenience. Can you imagine the chaos if you had to trade your marketable skills for the things you needed? Can you imagine a conversation between a secretary and the owner of a plum tree?

"I'd like some plums."

"What do you have to trade?"

"I can type a letter. I'll type a letter for a dozen plums."

"I don't have any letters."

"Well, then I'll type one for you."

"I don't need any letters. What else you got?"

"I can Xerox."

"I don't have any letters. I don't have anything to Xerox."

"I can send a fax."

"Facts about what?"

"No, fax. Facsimile. You use it to send letters."

"How many times do I have to tell you? I don't have any letters."

"What do you want?"

"I want a chicken."

"I don't have a chicken."

"Do you have a duck?"

"No."

"A goose?"

"I don't have any poultry of any kind."

"Do you have a color TV?"

"Yes."

"I'll trade you a dozen plums for a color TV."

"That's not a fair trade."

"All right. Two dozen plums. And a rooster."

"You have a rooster? I thought you wanted a chicken."

"The rooster wanted the chicken. I told him I'd help him out. But if I get a TV, I don't care about the rooster."

From birth to age 18, a girl needs good parents, from 18 to 35 she needs good looks, from 35 to 55 she needs a good personality, and from 55 on she needs cash.

SOPHIE TUCKER

Do you see how much more cumbersome life would be if we had to barter for everything? Money, as a symbol of energy, makes it easier. For a certain amount of energy, you are given a symbol. You can then trade that symbol for something that requires someone else's energy.

Let's look at the limiting beliefs some people have about money. They aren't true, by the way. The one you want to prove to me is true is the very belief you would probably do best to dis prove for yourself--if you want more money, that is.

To disprove any of these, all you have to do is show that they are not true for one person . If one person did it, you can be number two. The statement, "All birds are red," can be disproved by finding just one bluebird.

It takes money to make money. *There are stories galore of people who started with nothing--sometimes less than nothing (they inherited debts)--and made great fortunes. It takes effectiveness and perseverance, not money, to make money.*

Poor is pure. *Some of the grinding poverty I have seen is hardly "pure." It's often filthy, fly-ridden, and disease-laden. It doesn't seem to induce inner purity, either. Not that there aren't pure poor people. I, however, happen to think they'd be just as pure if they were rich. I have also met some people I'd consider pure who have lots of money.*

People resent rich people, Some people resent rich people, some people resent poor people, some people resent people who resent other people. Some people also respect rich people.

Wealthy people are snobby. *I've met some down-to-earth poor people, and I've met some dirt-poor snobs, too. Some people snub others for not being "enough"--not pretty enough, not smart enough, not evolved enough. Money's just one of the things snobby people get snobbish about, regardless of income level.*

Lack of money is the root of all evil.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the

Kingdom of God. *That's from the Bible, quoting Jesus (Matthew 19:24). Actually, it's not hard for a camel to get through the eye of the needle. I got through. "The needle" is the name of a gate in Jerusalem. The "eye" is the small doorway in the larger gate. When the main gate was closed, the eye would open. In order for a camel to pass through the eye of the needle, the camel must (a) stand in line (when the main gate is closed and only the eye is open, there tends to be a line); (b) have its cargo removed; and (c) go through on its knees (which camels have no trouble doing).*

Knowing that Jesus often taught in parables, what do you suppose might have been the message? In order to enter the Kingdom of God (which Jesus said was "within" [Luke 17:21]), a rich man must (a) be patient; (b) unburden himself of his cargo (he can keep it, he just can't be attached to it); and (c) be humble, or in a symbolic posture of reverence (on his knees). That makes sense to me.

If you don't like this interpretation, there are stores for rich people that sell great big needles and little teeny stuffed camels. You can then sit all day long, if you so choose, putting a camel through the eye of a needle.

If I were rich I'd have The time that I lack To sit in the Synagogue and pray, And maybe have a seat by the Eastern Wall.
And I'd discuss the Holy Books With the learned men Seven hours every day. That would be the sweetest thing of all.

SHELDON HARNICK FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

Money is the root of all evil. *Back to the Bible. (Is it any wonder this has been called the world's most misunderstood book?) This one's from 1 Timothy 6:10. The full sentence is, "The love of money is the root of all evil." In the New International translation, it reads, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." In that sentence, a more accurate word for love is lust. The sentence then is, "Lusting after money is a root of all kinds of evil." I have no argument with that. Lusting after anything can be a root of all kinds of evil. Money in itself is neither good nor evil. It can be used for either, depending on the user's actions.*

You need training and education to get money. *There are many stories of people who made great fortunes, with which they endowed great educational institutions, while they themselves never graduated from elementary school. It's what you know and how you use it, not the amount of time you spent in school, that determines your ability to make money.*

Money can't buy me love. *As a friend of mine pointed out, "Whoever wrote that doesn't know where to shop."*

You can't take it with you. *True, but anywhere you can't take it, you wouldn't want it anyway.*

Money is too much responsibility. *If you have that much money, you can hire people to shoulder the burden of all that responsibility.*

It takes hard work to make money. *It takes smart work to make money. (In other words, being effective, not just efficient.)*

Money isn't everything. *No, but it's something.*

The best things in life are free. *As the same friend of mine pointed out, "Whoever wrote that doesn't shop where I shop."*

Money isn't spiritual or holy. *And poverty is? In fact, if you had lots of money, you could spend lots more time praying, meditating, buying yachts for your guru, putting a new wing on your church--whatever would help you get closer to God.*

Eliminating limiting beliefs about money is a good way to get more money. Another good way is enhancing uplifting beliefs. Just to show you I'm not the only one who has a high regard for money, here's what some other people have said in praise of money:

Lovey Howell: *You know, I really wouldn't mind being poor, if it weren't for one thing.*
Thurston Howell III: *What is that, my dear?*
Lovey: *Poverty..*

Gilligan's Island

- *Money is a sweet balm.*
  (Arabian proverb)
- *Money is a guarantee that we may have what we want in the future. Though we need nothing at the moment, it insures the possibility of satisfying a necessary desire when it arises.*
  (Aristotle)
- *Money is the sovereign queen of all delights--for her, the lawyer pleads, the soldier fights.*
  (Richard Barnfield)
- *Money is the symbol of everything that is necessary for man's well-being and happiness. Money means freedom, independence, liberty.*
  (Edward E. Beals)
- *Money is the sinews of art and literature.*
  (Samuel Butler)
- *Money is Aladdin's lamp.*
  (Lord Byron)
- *Money is the representative of a certain quantity of corn or other commodity. Its value is in the necessities of the animal man. It is so much warmth, so much bread.*
  (RALPH WALDO EMERSON)

- *Money is like an arm or a leg--use it or lose it.*
  (Henry Ford)
- *Money is health, and liberty, and strength.*
  (Charles Lamb)
- *Money is the sixth sense which enables you to enjoy the other five.*
  (Somerset Maugham)
- *Money is that which brings honor, friends, conquest, and realms.*
  (John Milton)
- *Money is the only substance which can keep a cold world from nicknaming a citizen "Hey, you!"*
  (Wilson Mizner)
- *Money is the cause of good things to a good man, of evil things to a bad man.*
  (Philo)
- *Money is human happiness in the abstract.*
  Arthur Schopenhauer
- *Money is the most important thing in the world.*
  George Bernard Shaw
- *Money is an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and as a universal provider for everything except happiness.*
  Wall Street Journal
- *Money is the root of all good.*
  Rudolf Wanderone

A private railroad car is not an acquired taste. One takes to it immediately.

ELEANOR R. BELMONT

Here are some suggestions on how to have more money:

1. *Remember that money is just a symbol of energy. What you do with the energy will determine the money's effect on you and those around you.*
2. *Money is a method--not an intention, belief, or experience. Money in and of itself will not make you happy, joyful, fulfilled, content, or anything else. It will make you rich, but that, too, is a symbol. Money is a tool. You can build things with tools, but the tool is not the thing you want built.*
3. *Be open to receiving money from any source, in any amount, in any form, at any time. Learn to say, "Yes, thank you," when people offer you things that have financial value.*
4. *Be open to spend. Life is cycles of giving and receiving. We breathe in, we breathe out. The exhale is as important as the inhale. If we stop inhaling or exhaling for any period of time, life becomes remarkably uncomfortable. Also, keeping the money flowing about you allows for more of the experiences you wanted the money for in the first place.*
5. *Affirm money. Use affirmations that contain the words, money, cash, dollars, and so on. (As with the word death, we seem to avoid using the word money. If you want money, ask*

for money.) "I am enjoying the large sums of money that flow into my life, quickly and effortlessly, this or something better for the highest good of all concerned."

6. *Give 10% away. This is called tithing. By giving 10% away (to your church, your favorite charity, any cause you believe in), you are not only passing some energy along for good use, you are saying, "Thank you. I have more than I need." This is a major statement of abundance. Be a joyful giver so that you can also be a joyful receiver.*
7. *Enjoy the money you have. If you think you don't have enough to enjoy yourself now, you will probably not have enough when you have millions. Remove the "unfun" you may have attached to money. Take some money and do something enjoyable . Right now.*

Money-giving is a very good criterion of a person's mental health. Generous people are rarely mentally ill people.

DR. KARL A. MENNINGER

8. *Be grateful for the money you already have. When I was in Egypt, I stopped at a town on the banks of the Nile. The richest man in town had something no one else in town had. It was this one possession that made him the richest man in town. Everyone knew he was the richest man in town because he had this. With great pride he showed it to me. What do you think it was? A TV? A dishwasher? A blender? No. The town had no electricity. A bathtub? A sink? A toilet? No. The town had no running water. The man was the richest man in town because he had a cement floor . It was cracked, it was filthy, it was falling apart, but he was proud of it because everyone else's floor was dirt. Be grateful for the money (and things you bought with the money) you have.*
9. *I don't have a number 9, but most lists of ten things have a number 9, so I thought this one might as well.*
10. *Keep 10% of your increase as a "money magnet." Keep it, in cash or tangible valuables. As it grows, it attracts money to you. How? The more you have, the less anxiety you feel about money; therefore the more you are likely to get.*

Money is better than poverty, if only for financial reasons.

Woody Allen

I don't like money, actually, but it quiets my nerves.

JOE LOUIS

The Power of Partnership

A friend is a gift you give yourself.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

The support you can gather from good friends, groups, and your Master Teacher is formidable. The encouragement you can give them in return (yes, even Master Teachers need a little encouragement) is substantial.

To use your goals and aspirations as small talk over dinner dissipates their energy. But to meet with like minds and discuss the challenges and triumphs of mastering your life; that has power, splendor, and esteem.

- *Friends are, of course, invaluable--for both creation and recreation. People who love us for what we are, not what we have already done, are great support when we're trying to do and be more.*
- *You can form or join a support group of like-minded people moving in a similar direction. Regular meetings at which victories are celebrated, problems solved, and new ideas brainstormed, can be one of the best ways to produce ongoing results.*
- *Professional counselors, advisors, and consultants are available--at a price, of course--but the insight and wisdom they can impart in a brief session may be priceless.*
- *Books, tapes, lectures, and courses of all kinds make you "partners" with the finest minds of all time. Just because people aren't there "in person" doesn't mean there's not a relationship between you and them. For the most part, people take the time to write a book, make a tape, or teach a course because they care. Be the beneficiary of their knowledge, experience, and caring.*
- *Lest I forget, you have many Master Teachers--and your own personal Master Teacher, who is always with you. Spend time in your sanctuary with your Master Teacher. Learn to listen to your Master Teacher's voice throughout the day. Let the dialogue between the two of you be ongoing.*

Nothing shortens a journey so pleasantly as an account of misfortunes at which the hearer is permitted to laugh.

QUENTIN CRISP

One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.

CARL JUNG

How Much Is Enough?

I think and think for months and years. Ninety-nine times, the conclusion is false. The hundredth

time I am right.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

People often wonder: How long will this take? How much work is enough? How much affirming, planning, and acting must I do to get what I want?

The answer is very simple: when you have what you want, it was enough.

This is not the answer most people want to hear. We are so used to delivery schedules and travel timetables that precisely pinpoint when it (or we) will arrive, it's often hard to accept the ancient wisdom, "It'll shine when it shines."

Sorry. That is the only answer I have.

Our estimates of time are only estimates--best guesses. Some things will happen sooner, some later. If your goal is not reached in the time frame you set, set a new time frame. Do whatever else needs to be done to succeed. When you've done all that and it's still not enough, do some more. When do you stop doing? When you've gotten what you want.

People sometimes stop when they are so close to their goals because they become discouraged. When you take the dis off discourage, you have what you need to press on: courage.

Do whatever it takes to achieve what you want. Don't accept the limitations of other people who claim things are "unchangeable." If it's written in stone, bring your hammer and chisel.

When you have what you want, that was enough.

Receiving

I am open to receive With every breath I breathe.

MICHAEL SUN

Some people select their goals, do the necessary work, and still don't have what they want. These people need to do more work--but maybe it's not external work. Maybe it's on themselves.

When we work for something, we must be open to receive. This may seem silly, but some people have some rather definite limits on what they can receive

and how they can receive it. If you try to give them a million dollars, they'll accept it, but only if the million dollars is in new $100 bills and delivered to the back door, at 4:15 sharp, next Wednesday.

If we want more, it's helpful to know how to receive more. We receive more by saying, "Yes." If they want to give you a million dollars in pennies, take it. If they want you to pick them up, say you'll be right over. If they want to deliver the money, tell 'em, "Pick your door."

Just as you have many methods and behaviors for fulfilling your desires and intentions, life has many ways to give you what you've been asking for.

Remember, too, that you are worthy of all the good that comes your way. How do I know? If you weren't worthy, it wouldn't come your way. If you want a relationship, and someone "over and above" your dreams appears on your doorstep with flowers and candy, don't say, "You must have the wrong house"--invite the lucky person in.

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART FIVE

TOOLS FOR SUCCESSFUL DOERS<

TO HAVE JOY AND TO HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY

Gladness of the heart is the life of a man, and the joyfulness of a man prolongeth his days.

ECCLESIASTICUS 30:22

There is no end to joy--no upper limit. When you think you've had all the joy you can tolerate, you've only reached *your* limit, not joy's. Use that moment to expand your limit.

Don't just increase joy by a little. Double it. Then, double that. Discover that your capacity to know joy is as limitless as joy itself.

As limitless as you.

Grow Up!

The human race, to which so many of my readers belong, has been playing at children's games from the beginning, which is a nuisance for the few people who grow up.

G. K. CHESTERTON
1904

Ever watch someone have a temper tantrum? Or go on and on about how unfairly the world treated her? Or cry over the loss of a love he didn't much like anyway? Ever watch a fit of jealousy, pettiness, or vindictiveness? On those occasions, didn't you want to quote Joan Rivers: *"Grow up!"*

I'm not talking about child*like* qualities--joy, playfulness, spontaneity. I'm talking about child*ish* traits--spoiled, infantile, inconsiderate.

This sort of immaturity hurts and offends not just those around us; it hurts and offends *us.* Even while we're doing it, we know, "This isn't right." Even through the anger, fear, and separation, we know, "This isn't necessary."

And it's not. It's time to mature, to ripen, to grow up.

Heal the Past

I don't have a warm personal enemy left. They've all died off. I miss them terribly because they helped define me.

CLAIRE BOOTH LUCE

What hurts about the past is our *memory.* We remember the pain of an event, and we hurt again. Fortunately, we can heal the memories of the past.

One technique is to go into your sanctuary (remembering to let the light at your entryway surround, fill, protect, bless, and heal you for your highest good), sit in front of the video screen, and, on the screen, watch the memory that is causing the pain. The "halo" around the screen is dark. Let the memory play itself out. (If the images are difficult, you might ask your Master Teacher to join you. Master Teachers are great for holding hands, giving comfort, and instilling courage.)

Then let the image fade. Let the white light around the screen glow brightly. Then see the same scene *the way you wanted it to be.* What do you wish had happened? See it. What do you wish you had said? Hear yourself saying it. How do you wish others had responded? See them responding that way. What would you like to have felt? Feel that.

Replacing a negative memory with a positive one heals it.

You can also use your health center. Perhaps there is a special memory-healing device or magic elixir or a master with a touch that heals. Whatever you wish medical science had that would heal the past, imagine it in your health center, and use it.

If the hurt involves other people, you can invite them into your sanctuary. Under the guidance and protection of your Master Teacher, you can tell them whatever it is you want them to know, forgive them (and yourself), and let them go into that pure, white light of the people mover.

There's no need to dwell on the past, remembering every little painful detail and then healing it. Just heal what surfaces on its own, and move on with your life--your present.

Events in the past may be roughly divided into those which probably never happened and those which do not matter.

W. R. INGE DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S, LONDON

Memory, the priestess, kills the present and offers its heart on the shrine of the dead past.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Health

Of one thing I am certain, the body is not the measure of healing--peace is the measure.

GEORGE MELTON

Health is the state about which medicine has nothing to say.

W. H. AUDEN

Health is more than just the lack of illness--health is aliveness, energy, joy.

By always focusing on eliminating illness, few of us learn how to enhance health--or even that enhancing health is possible. It is.

You don't have to be sick to get better.

Health is not just for the body. Health includes the mind, the emotions, the whole person. Health is the amount of vibrant, peaceful, loving energy flowing through your being. The more energy, the greater the health.

Let that energy flow in you, through you.

Health is not heavy. Health is light work.

For Giving

God may forgive you, but I never can.

ELIZABETH I
1533-1603

Forgiving means "for giving"--*in favor of* giving.

When you forgive another, to whom do you give? The other? Sometimes. Yourself? Always. To forgive another is being in favor of giving to yourself.

In addition, most of us judge ourselves more harshly and more often than we judge others. It's important to forgive ourselves for all the things we hold against ourselves.

There is a third judgment to forgive: the fact that we judged in the first place. When we judge, we leave our happiness behind--sometimes *way* behind. We know this, and we judge ourselves for having judged.

The layers of forgiveness, then, are: first, the person we judged (ourselves or another); and, second, ourselves for having judged in the first place.

The technique? Simple.

Say to yourself, "I forgive _____ (NAME OF THE PERSON, PLACE, OR THING YOU JUDGED, INCLUDING YOURSELF) for _____ (THE `TRANSGRESSION'). I forgive myself for judging _____ (SAME PERSON, PLACE, OR THING, INCLUDING YOURSELF) for _____ (WHAT YOU JUDGED)."

That's it. Simple, but amazingly effective. You can say it out loud, or say it to yourself.

If you have a lot to forgive one person for, you might want to invite that person into your sanctuary and forgive the person there. (Ask your Master Teacher to come along, if you like.)

That's all there is to forgiveness. Simple but powerful. How powerful? Try it for five minutes. See what happens.

Of course God will forgive me; that's his business.

HEINRICH HEINE LAST WORDS 1856

The American public would forgive me anything except running off with Eddie Fisher.

JACQUELINE KENNEDY 1964

For Getting

Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.

B. F. SKINNER

After you've forgiven the transgression and judgment, there's only one thing to do: forget them. Whatever "protection" you think you may gain from remembering all your past grievances is far less important than the balm of forgetting.

What's the value in forgetting? It's all in the word: for getting--to be in favor of getting, of receiving.

We sometimes think that shaking a fist (threateningly, with all the remembered transgressions) is the way to get something. A shaking fist tends to beget a shaking (or swinging) fist.

To receive, for give. To get, for get.

Remembering a grievance locks you into remembering hurt, pain, anger, betrayal, and disappointment. Who on earth wants *that?* Let it go. *For give* it away. Then *for get* something new and better (light-er) in its place.

Heal the memories. Forgive the past. Then forget it. Let it go. It is not worth remembering. None of it's worth remembering. What's worth *experiencing* is the joy of this moment.

To get it, for get.

Parents

The children despise their parents until the age of forty, when they suddenly become just like them--thus preserving the system.

QUENTIN CREWE

Why, just when we were feeling all joyful, did I have to bring *them* up? Well, they brought *us* up, so, for a moment, allow me to bring *them* up.

It may seem that I have been harsh on parents in this book. When explaining why we feel unworthy, think negatively, or aren't happy, I often returned to the childhood, and there loomed Mom and Dad.

Yes, I am guilty of that, and I now make my amends with these thoughts:

1. Your childhood is over. *You* are now in charge of your life. You can't blame the past--or anyone in it--for what you do *today* . Even if you can formulate a convincing argument to the contrary, it does you no good. Your childhood is gone. It's past.

   Blaming the past is like blaming gravity for the glass you broke. Yes, without gravity, the glass would not have fallen. But you *know* about gravity and you *know* about glasses and you *know* what happens when you combine gravity, a falling glass, and a hard surface.

   Your childhood is like gravity. It was what it was. Your life today is like the glass. Handle it with care. If it breaks, clean up the mess, and get another glass (your life tomorrow) from the cupboard.

2. Your parents did the best they could with what they knew. Like you, your parents weren't given an instruction manual for life. They had to learn it as they went along. They had to learn how to make a living, run a home, get along with each other, and raise a baby (you) all at the same time. No easy task. Along the way, they made lots of mistakes. They weren't the perfect parents. But, let's face it, you weren't the perfect child, either.
3. How you turned out is mostly a result of genetics anyway.
4. Your parents gave you the greatest gift of all: Life. Whatever else they did or didn't do, if not for them, you wouldn't be here. They deserve a big thank-you for that.

You don't have to *like* your parents. But it feels better if you learn to love them.

My mother had a great deal of trouble with me, but I think she enjoyed it.

MARK TWAIN

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it.

J. D. SALINGER
CATCHER IN THE RYE

Laughter

Laugh. Out loud. Often.

Laughter is inner jogging.

NORMAN COUSINS

Laughter's good for you--which may be too bad. If it raised the cholesterol count or had too many calories, people might do it more often. If laughter were only *forbidden* , then people would do it all the time. We'd have laugh police. If they caught you laughing, they'd write you a ticket.

Children's TV programming would have to be monitored very carefully. We wouldn't want anyone pushing humor on innocent young minds. "What are you kids doing in there?" "We're drinking beer and smoking cigarettes." "Okay, but no laughing."

Pop Quiz! Which is funniest:

A. "I was gratified to be able to answer promptly. I said I don't know." (Mark Twain)
B. "Aristotle was famous for knowing everything. He taught that the brain exists merely to cool the blood and is not involved in the process of thinking. This is true only of certain persons." (Will Cuppy)
C. "The school of hard knocks is an accelerated curriculum." (Menander)
D. "I knew I was an unwanted baby when I saw that my bath toys were a toaster and a radio." (Joan Rivers)
E. "My parents put a live Teddy bear in my crib." (Woody Allen)
F. "Never lend your car to anyone to whom you have given birth." (Erma Bombeck)
G. Life is like laughing with a cracked rib.

Tears

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean, Tears from the depth of some divine despair Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes, In looking on the happy autumn fields, And thinking of the days that are no more.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON
1847

Crying, like laughing, is a marvelous, natural release. People feel *so good* after a cry, I wonder why it's such a taboo.

People come pouring out of a movie theater, sniffling and dripping--you'd think they'd set off a tear gas canister. You ask them, "What happened?" fully expecting the story of a disaster. They sob, "That was the best movie I ever saw." (One wants to remind them that the correct grammar necessitates, "That was the best movie I *have* ever *seen*," but they seem so upset already.)

Tears are natural to healing *and* enjoying. Intense feelings of gratitude, awe, and compassion are often accompanied by tears. "Moved to tears," as they say.

Allow yourself to be moved by your life, not just the movies.

Wealth

To live content with small means; to seek elegance rather than luxury, and refinement rather than fashion; to be worthy, not respectable, and wealthy, not rich; to study hard, think quietly, talk gently, act frankly; to listen to stars and birds, to babes and sages, with open heart; to bear all cheerfully, do all bravely, await occasions, hurry never. In a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common. This is to be my symphony.

WILLIAM HENRY CHANNING
1810-1884

Unlike money, wealth is not just what you have. Wealth is what you can do without.

Who is wealthier, the person who is addicted to something and has plenty of money to buy it, or the person who doesn't desire the addictive substance at all?

Wealthy people carry their riches within. The less they need of this physical world, the wealthier they are. They may or may not have large sums of money. It matters not. Whatever they have is fine.

Wealth is health, happiness, abundance, prosperity, riches, loving, caring, sharing, learning, knowing what we want, opportunity, enjoying, and balance.

Wealth is enjoying one's own company.

Wealth is being able to love oneself fully.

WEALTH 101: Wealth Is Much More Than Money. At your local bookstore, or call 1-800-LIFE-101.

Sacrifice

Don't go to piano bars where young, unemployed actors get up and sing. Definitely don't be a young, unemployed actor who gets up and sings.

TONY LANG

You would be far happier if you gave up certain things. This may not be easy for you. I nonetheless suggest you give them up--go cold turkey--starting right now, this minute, before you turn the page.

Give is a nice word. *Up* is a nice word. Put them together, and people can get awfully nasty. "I'm not going to give up *anything*. And *sacrifice.* That's even *worse* than giving up. Sacrifice means giving up something *really* good."

Maybe not. I think you'd be better off sacrificing greed, lust, hurt, judgments, demands, spoiledness, envy, jealousy, vindictiveness.

Did you think I was going to ask you to give up *good* stuff? Most people think that sacrifice means giving up *only* the good stuff. Not so. The negative stuff, the cold stuff, the hard stuff--you can sacrifice those, too.

And you can give them *up.* Surrender them to the higher part of yourself. Surround them with light. Let them go.

You don't need them anymore.

Service

The idea that life is take, take, take (learn, learn, learn) needs to be balanced with the idea that life is also giving (teaching). Receiving and giving (learning and teaching) are two parts of a single flow, like breathing in (receiving) and breathing out (giving). One cannot take place without the other.

The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea are made of the same water. It flows down, clear and cool, from the heights of Hermon and the roots of the cedars of Lebanon. The Sea of Galilee makes beauty of it, for the Sea of Galilee has an outlet. It gets to give. It gathers in its riches that it may pour them out again to fertilize the Jordan plain. But the Dead Sea with the same water makes horror. For the Dead Sea has no outlet. It gets to keep.

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK *THE MEANING OF SERVICE*
1920

We inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. Plants absorb the carbon dioxide and release oxygen. The cycle is complete. This connection between giving and receiving is fundamental to life.

What is waste to animals is essential to plants, and vice versa. Our own taking from and giving to life is just as intimately connected.

We seem to be students of those who know more than we do, doers with those who know just about as much as we do, and teachers of those who know less than we do. Life is a process of doing, learning, enjoying, *and* teaching.

In ten minutes on the job, you might learn how to transfer a call on the new phone system, consult with a co-worker on a method for increasing sales, and teach someone how to load paper into the copy machine. And this learning-doing-teaching can take place with the same person.

This learning-doing-teaching happens in almost every area of life--and all three often happen simultaneously. The child we are teaching to read and write is, in the same moment, teaching us innocence and wonder.

When we give a stranger directions, why do we feel so good? Because giving is a natural part of life. If we're lost and somebody puts us on the right track, that feels good, too. Receiving is also a natural part of life.

Boy: Teach me what you know, Jim.
Reverend Jim: That would take hours, Terry. Ah, what the heck! We've all got a little Obi Wan Kenobie in us.

When we learn to give to ourselves so fully that our cup overflows, then we may be called to be of service. Service is not a chore. Service is a privilege.

In truth, giving is not just a natural act; it hurts *not* to give. We see the pain in another, and we want to ease the hurt. We see someone lost, and want to help them find the way.

Sometimes our gift is a hug or a kind word or the right bit of information at the right moment. Perhaps it's a smile or a sigh or a laugh. And maybe you cry with someone--or for them.

There is no need to seek students, just as there is no need to seek lessons. When the teacher is ready, the student appears.

When the server is ready, the service appears.

The Attitude of Gratitude

Tomorrow is the most important thing in life. Comes into us at midnight very clean. It's perfect when it arrives and it puts itself in our hands. It hopes we've learned something from yesterday.

JOHN WAYNE

The word *gratitude* comes from the root *gratus* , which means pleasing. The obvious interpretation is that when you are pleased with something, you are grateful. A second interpretation--the more radical, and therefore the one I prefer--is that when you are grateful, *then* you are pleased, not by the thing, but by the gratitude.

In other words, to feel pleased, be grateful.

We have so much to be grateful for. Alas, it's part of human behavior to take good things for granted. It's biological, actually. A part of our brain filters out whatever isn't hurtful, fearful, or physically moving. This filtering helped our forebears separate the beasts from the rocks and the trees.

Today, this same device starts filtering out all the good things we have, almost as soon as we get them. After a week or month or year with something that initially was *wonderful* , we have grown accustomed to it. We take it for granted.

What to do? Counteract complacency. *Consciously* be grateful for the good in your life. Make lists. Have gratitude flings. Be thankful for little things, big things, every thing.

Let us be thankful for the fools. But for them the rest of us could not succeed.

MARK TWAIN

Appreciate the things that are so magnificent, you took them for granted decades ago. What am I talking about? Your senses. Quick! Name all five! Some people can name the five Great Lakes faster than name their own senses. Let's not forget the brain and the body and the emotions, and walking, talking, thumbs. Thumbs? Sure: Try to pick up some things without using your thumbs.

As Dale Evans once said, "I'm so busy loving *everybody,* I don't have any time to hate *anybody.*" When you start noticing even a small portion of all there is to be grateful for, you'll find there's no room for lack, hurt, or want.

The attitude of gratitude: the great, full feeling.

Rest and be thankful.

INSCRIPTION ON A STONE SEAT IN THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

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LIFE 101

Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life In School -- But Didn't

PART FIVE

TOOLS FOR SUCCESSFUL DOERS<

It Takes Strength to Be Happy

Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city.

GEORGE BURNS

Happiness is not easy. It's not for the weak, the timid, the wishy-washy, the easily dissuaded, or the uncertain.

Happiness is not for wimps.

Happiness requires courage, stamina, persistence, fortitude, perseverance, bravery, boldness, valor, vigor, concentration, solidity, substance, backbone, grit, guts, moxie, nerve, pluck, resilience, spunk, tenacity, tolerance, will power, chutzpah, and a good thesaurus.

If you think happiness is easy, think again. The *theory* of happiness is simple; so simple, in fact, it can be stated in a parenthesis ("to be happy, think happy thoughts") in the middle of a not-very-long sentence. The successful *implementation* of that theory--that's where the courage, stamina, etc., come in.

We confide in our strength, without boasting of it; we respect that of others, without fearing it.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Our lives are full of happy things we can think happy thoughts about. If we run out of those, there are books, music, and movies full of happy thoughts. All we have to do is focus on the happy things to think happy thoughts, which will make us happy. That's all.

THEN WHY THE HELL AREN'T WE HAPPY ALL THE TIME!!??

With the pressures and distractions we've already discussed--the Fight or Flight Response, the inaccurate yet all-pervading feeling of unworthiness, habits, addictions, brain parts that filter out good stuff, heredity, and so on--is it any wonder that thinking happy thoughts takes some *strength*.

It also takes practice, patience, and discipline. It's not an easy challenge, but when you're through, you'll know you've done your work and done it well. You'll be among the strong, the proud, the few.

Be all that you can be. Join the happy.

Do you really think it is weakness that yields to temptation? I tell you that there are terrible temptations which it requires strength, strength and courage, to yield to.

OSCAR WILDE

You Don't *Have* to Do Anything

If you don't like what you're doing, you can always pick up your needle and move to another groove.

TIMOTHY LEARY

Really. You don't. Well, yes, a few biological things, but for the most part, everything you do you do because you're *choosing* to do it. You might as well admit that. At least to yourself. It makes life easier.

"Have to" implies need, and need is food-shelter-clothing. Everything else is just a "want." Therefore, unless it's doing something to put a scrap of food in your mouth, a few rags on your back, or a temporary roof over your head, you don't *have to* do it.

All those things you think you *have* to do, you can tell yourself, "I don't have to _____," and fill in the blank. It's quite liberating. It feels good. Then if you *choose* to do whatever you declared you don't *have* to do, that's fine.

You can add, "And what I choose to do, I can do." Because you can.

Hurry Up and Be Patient!

Learn the art of patience. Apply discipline to your thoughts when they become anxious over the outcome of a goal. Impatience breeds anxiety, fear, discouragement and failure. Patience creates confidence, decisiveness and a rational outlook, which eventually leads to success.

BRIAN ADAMS

The sooner you're patient, the easier your life will become. Really. When you're patient, you can relax and enjoy the ride. Life has its own timing. Although perfect, life often disagrees with our timetables.

You feel *so good* about life when you're patient. I would suggest that you not delay a moment. Obtain patience at your earliest opportunity. It makes obtaining everything else much easier, and much more fun. And if you *don't* get *all* of what you want, that's okay, because you're patient.

Some people like to doctor life--they think they can "fix" it. Life doesn't need a doctor. It's not sick. As KungFucious said, "If you want to doctor life, maybe you need to be patient."

Speaking of doctors, have I told you of all the health problems that can be caused by impatience? Do you know how much stress getting sick causes the body? A lot. People get sick from it. It's best to avoid all that. Your life may depend on how quickly you can get patient.

Not that I want to rush you. Do it in your own time. But hurry.

He ranged his tropes, and preached up patience; Backed his opinion with quotations.

MATTHEW PRIOR
1708

I just hate to see anyone suffer needlessly. You can start by taking a deep breath--all the way down into your lower abdomen. Hurry up and do it before you have to do something else, so you can take your time. That's important.

There. Doesn't that feel better? That's the beginning of patience.

I'm extraordinarily patient provided I get my own way in the end.

MARGARET THATCHER

Well, I don't want to write more than two pages on patience, and I'm running out of room. I hope I have impressed on you the dire need to be patient. But there's no hurry. If you're impatient, be

patient with that. Unless, of course, you have trouble enjoying the moment, in which case, rather than being patient with impatience, you might as well be patient with life, and I'm running out of room for this chapter so I have to run now. By the way, the key to patience is acceptance.

Live Now

We are here and it is now. Further than that, all knowledge is moonshine.

H. L. MENCKEN

What a strange title for a chapter. "Live Now." When *else* are we supposed to live? Now, of course. But many people spend a lot of time (that precious commodity for getting what you want) in the past--remembering things that happened, and getting upset about them.

Other people spend a lot of time in the future, worrying about this, that, and something else--most of which probably will never come to pass. (F.E.A.R. = False Expectations Appearing Real.)

Some people are bi-timers. They can say "bye" to the present and go zipping off into the past *and* the future simultaneously.

Getting there isn't half the fun.-- it's all the fun.

ROBERT TOWNSEND

What happened to the moment? No, don't answer that. You have to go back in the past to do so. What about *this* moment. Oops. Gone. It's easier to pick up quicksilver than to capture the moment.

So don't capture it. There's nothing to capture. It's all here--present, although perhaps slightly unaccounted for. There's nothing to struggle with. When you come back from the past or the future, the present will always be here, waiting.

It won't be the *same* present, of course. As Heraclitus observed around 500 B.C. (talk about the past), "You cannot step twice into the same river; for other waters are always flowing on to you." Thus it is with time.

I still lived in the future--
a habit which is the death of happiness.

QUENTIN CRISP

The irony is that there's nowhere to go. It's all here, now, in the moment. The further irony is that

you *can't* go anywhere, even if you tried. If you're in the "past" or the "future," you're not in those places at all. You're *thinking* and *feeling* about them --but you're thinking and feeling about the past and future *right now.* In the present.

We are *always* in the present, no matter what we do, no matter where we "go." If someone insists, "Come present!" tell them, "I was present--with my thoughts. If you do something more interesting than my thoughts, I'll pay attention to you." *That* should bring them present.

"Live Now." What a strange title for a chapter.

Worthiness

She knows what is the best purpose of education: not to be frightened by the best but to treat it as part of daily life.

JOHN MASON BROWN

There is nothing you need to do to become worthy. You already *are* worthy. You don't even have to discover your worthiness. You can feel utterly worthless and still be worthy.

People have said, "I don't feel worthy to be alive." But you *are* alive; therefore you *must* be worthy. It's very simple: if you're not worth life, you don't have it.

Worthiness is a given. It has nothing to do with action, thoughts, feelings, mind, body, emotions, or anything else. You are worthy of being because you *are.* Period. End of chapter.

Worthiness, Part Two

So much is a man worth as he esteems himself.

FRANOIS RABELAIS
1532

"If I'm worthy just because I am, how come I don't *feel* worthy?"

You're not talking about worthiness. You're talking about *self-esteem*. If you want to think better about yourself and feel better about yourself, learn to improve your self-esteem.

"How do I improve self-esteem?"

Next chapter.

Self-Esteem

Ofttimes nothing profits more Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right Well managed.

JOHN MILTON 1667

Self-esteem is how you think and feel about yourself--how you *regard* yourself.

If you were taught that you *must* be perfect, then your self-esteem might be pretty low--humans are notoriously not perfect. Or, maybe you were taught that everything you do and whatever you do is perfect, in which case, your self-esteem might be pretty high.

Increasing your self-esteem is easy. You simply do good things, *and remember that you did them*.

Most people already *do* enough good for some high-level self-esteem. Alas, people tend to *forget*. They do so much good, most of it's taken for granted and forgotten as soon as it's done.

Make a list of all the good you do. Then review the list. Often. Take note of the often-overlooked good you do. Did you bathe in the past forty-eight hours? Very good. Brush your teeth, too? Terrific. Use deodorant? Excellent. You've done your part in the fight against indoor air pollution. Put those on your list.

Men stumble over the truth from time to time, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing happened.

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

Take note of your moment-by-moment life: the people you smile at, the pedestrians you stop for, the friends you support, the relatives you're nice to, the boss (or employees) you put up with. The list goes on and on.

Honestly--you're a pretty decent human being, aren't you? Of course you are. How do I know? Nasty, wicked people don't read books such as this. If they do, they certainly don't get as far as page 442.

If the grass is greener in the other fellow's yard, let him worry about cutting it.

FRED ALLEN

You're great--warm, witty, friendly, kind, compassionate. Now if you only had a better memory so you could remember all this without having to buy books to remind you, you'd be perfect.

Meditate, Contemplate, or "Just Sits"

Sometimes I sits and thinks, and sometimes I just sits.

SATCHEL PAIGE

In addition to visualization, you might like to try any number of meditative and contemplative techniques available--or you might just want to sit quietly and relax.

Whenever you meditate, contemplate, pray, do spiritual exercises, or "just sits," it's good to ask the white light to surround, fill, and protect you, knowing only that which is for your highest good and the highest good of all concerned will take place during your quiet time. You may want to do your meditation in your sanctuary.

Before starting, prepare your physical environment. Arrange not to be disturbed. Unplug the phone. Put a note on the door. Wear ear plugs if noises might distract you. (I like the soft foam-rubber kind sold under such trade names as E.A.R., HUSHER, and DECIDAMP.) Take care of your bodily needs. Have some water nearby if you get thirsty, and maybe some tissues, too.

Contemplation is thinking *about* something, often something uplifting. You could contemplate any of the hundreds of quotes or ideas in this book. Often, when we hear a new and potentially useful idea, we say, "I'll have to think about that." Contemplation is a good time to "think about that," to consider the truth of it, to imagine the changes and improvements it might make in your life.

Or, you could contemplate a nonverbal object, such as a flower, or a concept, such as God. The idea of contemplation is to set aside a certain

amount of quiet time to think about just *that,* whatever you decide "that" will be.

What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail? DR. ROBERT SCHULLER
Meditation. There are so many techniques of meditation, taught by so many books and organizations, that it's hard to define the word properly.

You might want to try various meditations to see what they're like. With meditation, please keep in mind that you'll never know until you do it. We may like to think we know what the effects of a given meditation will be by just reading the description, but I suggest you try it and then decide.

Breathing Meditation. Sit comfortably, close your eyes, and simply be aware of your breath. Follow it in and out. Don't "try" to breathe; don't consciously alter your rhythm of breathing; just follow the breath as it naturally flows in and out. If you get lost in thoughts, return to your breath.

Mantras. Some people like to add a word or sound to help the mind focus as the breath goes in and out. Some people use one or God or AUM (OHM) or l ove . These--or any others--are fine. As you breathe in, say to yourself, mentally, "love." As you breathe out, "love." If you don't like synchronizing sounds to breath, don't. It doesn't matter.

This art of resting the mind and the power of dismissing from it all care and worry is probably one of the secrets of energy in our great men.

CAPTAIN J. A. HADFIELD

It's not so much the sound, but the meaning you assign to the sound. You may use a mantra such as "Ummmm" just because it sounds good--satisfying and relaxing. Or you may say "Ahhhh" represents the pure sound of God. Because you say it does, it will.

Affirmations. Brief affirmations can be used in meditation. My favorites include "God is within me" and "I love myself."

Some people think meditation takes time away from physical accomplishment. Taken to extremes, of course, that's true. Most people, however, find that meditation creates more time than it takes. Meditation is for rest, healing, balance, and information. All these are helpful to attain a goal.

One of the primary complaints people have about meditating is, "My thoughts won't leave me alone." Well naturally --that's what the mind does; it thinks . Rather than fight the thoughts (good luck), you might listen

to the thoughts for nuggets of information. If a thought reminds you of something to do, write it down (or record it on a tape recorder). Then return to the meditation.

As the "to do" list fills, the mind empties. If the thought, "Call the bank," reappears, you need only tell yourself, "It's on the list. I can let that one go." And you will. It is important, however, to do the things on the list--or at least in a nonmeditative state to consider doing them. If you don't, you will continue to think about them, again and again.

When finished meditating, not only will you have had a better meditation, you will also have a "to do" list that can be very useful. One insight gleaned during a few minutes of meditation might save hours, perhaps days of unnecessary work. That's what I mean when I say--from a purely practical point of view--meditation can make more time than it takes.

Peace

First keep the peace within yourself, then you can also bring peace to others.

THOMAS KEMPIS
1420

If you want peace, stop fighting.

If you want peace of mind, stop fighting with your thoughts. Let them be. Let your mind think what it wants to think. It's going to anyway. As long as your mind gives you enough focus to take the next step in the direction you want to go, then let it be.

If you want peace in your emotions, stop trying to control them. Emotions are there to feel. Feel them. Take information from them as needed., and let them be what they want.

If you want physical peace, stop struggling. Don't push your body beyond its fatigue point. Get enough rest and exercise. Let your body be. Don't demand that it live up to every image of performance and perfection you think it should have.

If you want peace with others, don't fight them. Go your own way. Live your own life. If some walk with you, fine. If you walk alone for a while,

fine. If you don't like what's going on somewhere, leave. Maintain a portable paradise within yourself.

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.

EMERSON

We shall find peace. We shall hear the angels, we shall see the sky sparkling with diamonds.

CHEKHOV
1897

This does not mean you have to like what's going on. "The lion shall lie down with the lamb." It does not say the lion shall make love to the lamb. If you know you have to lie down with the lamb, bring a good book. That will occupy your mind so you don't have to feel animosity toward the lamb--you don't have to think about the lamb at all.

(And if you're the lamb, don't forget to wear your chain-mail fleece.)

When you're not against yourself or others, you are at peace.

Balance

Fortunate, indeed, is the man who takes exactly the right measure of himself, and holds a just balance between what he can acquire and what he can use, be it great or be it small!

PETER LATHAM
1789-1875

Have you noticed some contradictions in this book? So have I. Welcome to life.

Should we "get off our buts" and "do it," or should we "meditate, contemplate, and just sits." Should we laugh or cry? Should we work for money or for wealth? Should we cling tight to this life, or should we look forward to the release of death? Should we be flexible or firm? Assertive or accepting? Giving or receiving?

The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order.

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD

There is no single answer to these questions. It's a matter of time and timing, of seas and seasons, of breathing in and breathing out.

It's a matter of balance.

Balance is the point between the extremes. But it's not a static point--"I've found it; this is it!" The point is always shifting, always moving. A successful life can be like a successful tightrope walk. Sometimes the balance pole dips violently one way, sometimes it dips gently the other, and sometimes it's perfectly still.

How does one find and maintain balance? Vigilance. Internal vigilance. Internal vigilance is the price of freedom.

When you notice yourself out-of-balance, balance it at once. If you don't, it will find a reflection outside. Then there's something "out there" to balance, too. It's easier to balance it within, before it gets out. <P

This...reminds me of the way they used to weigh hogs in Texas. They would get a long plank, put it over a cross-bar, and somehow tie the hog on one end of the plank. They'd search all around till they found a stone that would balance the weight of the hog and they'd put that on the other end of the plank. Then they'd guess the weight of the stone.

JOHN DEWEY

For balanced action, ask yourself, "What would a master do?" Look through the eyes of a master. Masters always perform "right action." Seeing as a master sees, ask yourself, "What would a master do?" Sometimes a master would do nothing. Sometimes, quite a lot. "What would a master do?" Do that.

You are a master. You may as well get good at it.

Loving

People think love is an emotion. Love is good sense.

KEN KESEY

When we go within, we know that our core--our very being--is love. All we can do is share that love with ourselves and others; to make it a verb and to love as much as we can.

Our loving is a work in progress. We are continuously refining it, honing it, adding to it, shaping it. This is what we think we are doing. We also know love is continuously refining, honing, adding to, and shaping us.

Writing this book was an act of loving. I wanted to communicate the ideas found here because I find these ideas valuable. I know that reading this book was an act of loving on your part. People do not read books such as this without a fierce commitment to the love of self and others.

I wish I knew how to end this book. I am certainly capable of serving up some platitudes on love and calling it a day. But I've been honest with you thus far. I've written from my experiences--from my heart to yours, I like to think.

What do I have to say about loving?

- *Loving is an action. Love is a feeling. The difference between love and loving, is the difference between fish and fishing. I like loving --the moving, growing, changing, active, dynamic interplay (inner play?) between self and others, and between self and self.*
- *Loving starts with the individual. When we want loving from someone else to "make us whole," we know we are not giving ourselves the loving we need.*

If you feel you have both feet planted on level ground, then the university has failed you.

ROBERT F. GOHEEN

- *When we give ourselves the loving we need (and it takes so little time when we actually do it), our time with others tends to be joyful, graceful, playful, touching--in each moment complete.*
- *Loving is the greatest teacher.*

This book cannot be wrapped up in string and handed to you as a tidy package. Neither can life. Or loving. Life is a process. Ongoing processes don't have tidy endings, merely transitions.

So welcome to the transitional chapter of this book. From this point, it's not a book to be read (you're within minutes of completing that), but a book to be used.

And I, to the degree that I have been a "teacher," gladly hand the mantle over to your Master Teacher. I am content to become a reference librarian--here when you need to research questions such as "How am I supposed to use guilt as a friend?" "What was this about using relationships as a mirror?" or "Didn't he say something about money?"

At this point, I step down from the lectern and join you as a classmate.

It's been good taking this journey with you. Thank you for joining me--and letting me join you. LIFE 101 now makes the transition from a book that leads, to a book you can carry.

Take good care. School is still in session. The surprise continues. Enjoy.

Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.

CARL JUNG

Gude nicht, and joy be wi' you a'.

CAROLINA OLIPHANT
LIFE AND SONGS
1869

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